

AGRARIAN MOVEMENT IN RAJASTHAN

RAM PANDE M. A., Ph.D.

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PREFACE

Hitherto many historical studies of Rajasthan have taken as their nucleus the various kings of the erstwhile Rajput kingdoms. However well-informed and elaborate such studies may be, their approach has always been partial and one-dimensional, the reason being that the perspective is entirely of a different milieu.

The present work has a definitely distinct approach in that it concentrates on the agrarian movements that have taken place in these princedoms prior to Independence. It attempts to narrate the detailed accounts of the history of the common man.

The conditions of an ordinary villager in pre-Independence India is not hidden from anybody. Financially he was controlled by the village merchant known as *baniya* who had in his hands virtually the entire economy of the village. Again, the villager was under the direct and cruel control of the Jagirdar or, the Zamindar, a subordinate of a Raja (Prince) who was in turn himself under the hegemony of the British Empire. Despite all this the villager had great regard for the Panchayat, an institution of justice established by local tradition. The tiller of the land gladly shared what he produced morally, shared with those in the village who rendered a variety of services to the village. For example the carpenter who assisted the *kisan* in making agricultural implements, the sweeper who kept the village neat and clean, the cobbler who made shoes and *charas* (leather bucket for drawing water from the well for

agricultural purposes), and the barber who besides his essential function went round the village conveying the news about marriages, engagements, deaths or some feasts, arranged in the village, etc. They all were entitled to have a share in the produce of the *kisan*. This system of sharing in Rajasthan was known as *Kanwariah* in the western part of Rajasthan and as *lag* in the eastern part.

However, some modern writers also say that a Jat and a Rajput cannot pull on well in the same village because of their perpetual rivalries. This is based on the fact that in Marwar and Bikaner States and in some parts of Jaipur, Jats were the original owners of land before the Rajputs came and forcibly dispossessed them of the land, and became its masters. It is therefore logical that they may be at daggers drawn but except for one reference of *Waga-i-Sarkar Ajmer-Wa Ranthambhore* we do not find any mention of this type of relationship between the Jats and the Rajputs. Besides, the Jats and the Rajputs lived in the same village under the same arrangements. The most significant thing was that the villagers had a firm faith in the democratic institutions like the local panchayat which had successfully provided effective local leadership for any movement to fight injustice as we have found in the course of our study.

A comparative analysis of agrarian conditions in Russia, China and India brings out few interesting points. The Indian villager or common man, according to modern writers and history interpreters, was never treated as a serf as the villager of the common man was in pre-revolutionary Russia or China. In addition the peasant (*Kisan*) had eternal faith in the Indian tradition and was a great admirer of democratic values.

The Agrarian Movement in Rajasthan have not been paid adequate attention by the scholars though source material on the topic is vast. The nature of land-holdings in Rajasthan was unique and distinct in many ways compared to the land-holdings in other parts of the country. They belonged to the local kings, jagirdars, zamindars and *kisans*. Peasants were not the owners of the land but only tenants. They were subjected to heavy taxation devised in many ways.

The first Agrarian Movement in Rajasthan, which may be traced to the Bijolia unrest in 1897, culminated in the abolition of jagirdari and zamindari after Rajasthan became part of Independent India.

In the following pages I have tried to narrate the Kisan Movement of Rajasthan which has its own significance being the first of its kind and in many respects followed by Mahatma Gandhi's movements of Champaran and Kaira. The nature of the movements and the role of religion and caste in its shaping have been fully elaborated. The study reveals that villagers in India especially in Rajasthan have faith in democratic socialism which is quite different from Russian or Chinese socialism. More significant is that I have described the accounts and utility of the records and the sources available on the topic.

My heart-felt and sincerest gratitude for the Almighty by whose grace I was able to undertake the present project, and, despite all the difficulties in my way, have been able to complete it in the present form.

I am highly indebted to my friends, Shri Hari Shanker Sharma, Senior Research Officer, Gazetteer Department, Rajasthan Government, and Shri Suresh Rathore, Lecturer, School of Law, University of Rajasthan, who inspired me to undertake the present work after my article of the same title was accepted by the Indian Historical Records Commission. I am also grateful to Shri Giriraj Prasad Tiwari, member, Legislative Assembly Rajasthan, for his help.

My thanks are also due to the Director and staff of the National Archives of India, New Delhi, Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner, Saraswati Library, Fatehpur Shekhawati, Bharatiya Vidya Mandir Sodh Pratishthan, Bikaner, Udaipur Archives, and many others who possess a mass of useful original material on the subject and allowed me to use it. I must also thank Shri J.C. Srivastava, Librarian, National Archives of India, New Delhi, for his valuable help and co-operation.

RAM PANDE

JAIPUR

August 15, 1974.

INTRODUCTION

Feudal Set-Up and Political Limits of Rajasthan

During the British rule in India the country was divided into provinces and native princely States, the latter covering 45 per cent of the territory and 24 per cent of the total population.

In the princely States feudal land ownership existed in three forms—State (Government), the rulers' domain and privately owned land, by jagirdars. The ratio between the three differed in each princely State.¹

Private feudal land owners like zamindars were composed of numerous groups each with its own legal status. There were five such groups in Hyderabad, eight in Rajasthan, nine in Madhya Pradesh, ten in Saurashtra, etc.² They either paid the rulers as supreme proprietors of the land a small land revenue or were exempted from it.

Following the administrative reorganization of the princely States, all the different forms of private feudal land-holding were regarded as zamindari-type landlord property and were covered by legislation providing for the abolition of the zamindari system. In Rajasthan more than 62 per cent land was owned by jagirdars.

1. Kotovsky, *Agrarian Reforms in India*, pp. 13, 17.

2. *Ibid.*

Rajasthan State has, on its borders, Pakistan in the west, Haryana and Punjab States in the north, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh States in the east, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat States in the south.

Before independence Rajasthan was divided into various princely States³ which were further divided into several estates⁴ within themselves. The order of administration was feudal. The principle of government was the divine origin of State. The feudal system involved mutual preservation on the part of the Raja and Jagirdars. Tod has noted in his *Annals*⁵ that a king was responsible only to his jagirdars and jagirdars only to their sovereign. If the sovereign goes against jagirdars sometimes his crown and even life may be in danger.⁶

Till the dawn of freedom the people of Rajasthan were subjected to inhuman treatment at the hands of local jagirdars. They were deprived of every kind of human right. The Rajas and Jagirdars were free to do whatever they pleased. This was the result of the philosophy of the divine origin of State being as the base of the feudal social structure of Rajasthan. This was also the reason why public opinion could not develop. In the absence of freedom of expression and speech the subjects of

3. The States merged into Rajasthan after Independence were : Alwar, Bharatpur, Karoli, Dholpur, Jaipur, Tonk, Kishangarh, Bundi, Kota, Jhalawar, Dungarpur, Udaipur (Mewar), Partapgarh, Banswara, Sirohi, Jodhpur (Marwar), Jaisalmer, Bikaner and Chiefships of Shahpura, Lawa, and Kushalgarh.

In addition to the above States the estates of Ajmer-Merwara also merged into Rajasthan on November 1, 1956. Among these the principal were Bhinai, Sear, Masuda, Pisangan, Junio, Deolia, Kharwa, Badanwara, Mehru, Para, Deogarh-Beghera, Govindgarh, Tontoli, Barli, Bagsuri and Karot. (Only these were within the meaning of Sec. 20, Ajmer Land and Regulation II, 1877).

4. Worth noticing estates were Sikar and Khetri within the sovereignty of former Jaipur State.
5. Tod, Lt.-Col. James, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajputana*, Vol. I, p. 127.
6. Tod, Col. James, in his *Annals*, p. 127, has given an example of Jodhpur Court quoting a letter which he has included in the Appendix.

feudal Rajasthan could not develop a sense of individual freedom and self-confidence. Even the intelligentsia of the State has been the follower of the feudal system. Volumes after volumes were written eulogizing the deeds of the Rajas and Jagirdars but very little about the miserable conditions of those they ruled.

Geographical Position

Rajasthan has the shape of an irregular rhomb and is situated in the north-west of India. It lies between $23^{\circ} 4''$ and $30^{\circ} 11''$ N. latitudes and $69^{\circ} 29''$ and $78^{\circ} 17''$ E. longitudes with the Tropic of Cancer passing through its southern extremity. From north to south it has a maximum length of 784 km., while from east to west the maximum width is 850 km. The State covers an area of 342,214 sq. km. and is inhabited by 25,765,806 people.⁷ In terms of area it is the second largest State in India while in population it stands tenth in rank. 'It is in Rajasthan that the desert belt girdling half around the world merges into India's rain-fed centre. This has resulted in amazing variations in soil, climate, population and vast agricultural, mineral and industrial potentials.'⁸

There are wide variations in the physical relief of Rajasthan. It ranges from 30 metres above mean sea level in the vicinity of the Rann of Kutch to 500 metres and even over 750 at a few places. Nearly half of the State lies in the relief ranges of 150 to 350 metres. The Aravalli Ranges running from north-east to south-west, with Guru Shikhar near Mt. Abu as the highest point, constitute a major feature.

The Luni and a large number of its tributaries, mostly non-perennial, originating in the Aravalli Ranges, form the drainage of the arid region. The Western Banas, Sabarmati, Mahi, etc., also flow through the south-west into Gujarat. To the south-east there is a major river system consisting of rivers Chambal, Ahu, Kalisindh, Parbati, etc. The Banas and its various tributaries such as Berach, Khari and Moral draw the waters

7. Census Report, Rajasthan, 1971.

8. V. C. Misra quoted in *Ibid.*

of the eastern slopes of the Aravallis and fall into the Chambal. There are small basins of interior drainage as well, the most important being that of the Sambhar salt lake as well as some minor rivers to the north-east. Towards the north-west the Ganga and Rajasthan canal systems are bringing the waters of the Punjab plains to turn the arid areas into veritable vegetable granaries. Some other major irrigation projects are those of the Gurgaon Canal, Chambal Stage I and II, the Mahi and the Jakham.

Land Tenure

During the days of British rule there were three principal types of land tenures in India: *zamindari*, *ryotwari*, and *mahalwari*. There were other varieties also which can be classified under any of these types. The *zamindari* system may be classified into two categories: permanent settlement and temporary settlement. It existed in Uttar Pradesh, East Punjab, Rajasthan, Central India and the princely States. In Rajasthan the *jagirdari* system was mostly based on hereditary, *jagirdars* mostly being the near relations of the Raja. The essence of the *zamindari* (as also *jagirdari*) system consisted in making private landlords the proprietors of estates on condition of payment of a stipulated revenue to the State. Peasants obtained landholdings on lease from landlords who stood between the State and the tiller. Under the *ryotwari* system land was directly obtained from the State by the *ryots*, i.e., individual tenants. A *ryot's* request for land could not be rejected by the Government so long as he paid the officially fixed assessment to the State. The *mahalwari* system is defined by the Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee in these words: 'The principle of *mahalwari* or joint village system first adopted in Agra and Oudh and later extended to the Punjab was laid down in Regulation IX of 1803. Under this scheme the villages concerned were units by themselves, the ownership of property was joint or communal. These villages or *Mahals* were settled with directly, though a co-sharer of standing was generally selected to undertake the primary liability of paying the land revenue. Under this system the details regarding procedure, period of

settlement and assessment of land revenue vary from place to place'.⁹

But in Rajasthan land tenure differed from one princely State to another and even from estate to estate within the same State. Lands in Jaipur State were managed either directly by the Government or through assignees of land revenue, who held grants either specifically made by the ruler or recognized as such.¹⁰ These assignees who were called 'State Grantees' ranged from petty *Udkies* who held one or two bighas of land received in charity to large-estate holders like the Rao Raja of Sikar or the Raja of Khetri.¹¹ The more important of the tenures on which the State grants were held in the former State of Jaipur were: (1) *Jagir*, (2) *Muamlasuba* or *Istimrar*, (3) *Inam*, (4) *Tankha* (5) *Udak*, and (6) *Bhog*.¹²

Jaipur (State) was entitled to one-half of the gross produce of the soil but in actual practice the State's share varied from one-fourth to one-half. It was called *Latai* system. In the *Ijara* system, an *Ijaradar* was sought under a system of farming, a collective responsibility of the village community.¹³

Sikar and Khetri were autonomous estates with only Defence and Foreign Affairs in the hands of the Jaipur Ruler. They had their own tenures.

There was no jagirdari system in the princely State of Bharatpur. Even the Raja's relations were not treated with any special consideration. They were styled as *Thakurs* and had only 27 villages on land-free tenure. The only individual in the State calling for attention was the *Faujdar* of Ballabgarh. He was primer jagirdar for Jaipur State and was transferred to Bharatpur State on condition that the *status quo* would be maintained in his case,¹⁴ and hence the exception.

9. Quoted in Jain, S. C., *State and Agriculture*, p. 49.

10. *Jaipur*, A souvenir published on the occasion of All India Congress Committee session, 1948, p. 83.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 84.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 85.

13. *Ibid.* The land was *Khalsa* and non-*Khalsa*.

14. Ram Pande, *Bharatpur upto 1826*, p. 40.

There was no zamindar intermediary in Banswara.¹⁵ Only the best jagirs were held by the members of the Royal family.¹⁶ In Dungarpur there were four types of jagirs, viz. ; *Bhyats* (Special Privilege), called *Jivika*, *Solah*, *Battis*, and minor called *Gudabandi*.¹⁷

In Sirohi, all land belonged to the Maharao. But jagirs were given to the younger sons of Maharao, and of the previous rulers or as reward for meritorious service, which was not hereditary; only four to eight annas in the rupee was their share.¹⁸ *Susan* jagir was given to *maths*, temples, religious institutions, Brahmans and *charans*. They were exempted from *nazrana*.¹⁹ Special consideration, to pay less revenue, was granted to the Bhils and Minas so that they could come to settle down as agriculturists and give up bad practices. Similar consideration was granted to the Girasias.²⁰

Land revenue, as a rule, was taken in kind in Jaisalmer State. The system of payment in kind, instead of in cash, was better suited to the prevailing local conditions and offered automatic relief to cultivators in years of deficient rainfall and droughts.²¹ The rate of assessment for Kharif crops was one-sixth and for Rabi crops one-fifth. The *ryot* found no difficulty in paying the State dues.²²

Till 1940 there was no regular settlement in the former State of Kishangarh. Only the *Bapi* system was in practice. The *Bapi* rights were acquired on payment of the maximum amount of money to the State at a public auction for a specific plot of land. The rights which were acquired through *Bapi*

15. Banswara Settlement Report 1915-16 ; *Administrative Reports of Banswara, 1915-16*, p. 4.

16. *Administrative Reports of Banswara, 1923*.

17. *Administrative Report of Dungarpur, 1923*, p. 4; of 1942-43, p. 20.

18. Lala Sitaram, *History of Sirohi Raj*, p. 17.

19. *Ibid.*, for the classification of the jagirs see *Memoirs of Sirohi Jagirdars* (Abu Collection, Rajasthan University).

20. Lala Sitaram, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

21. *Administrative Report of Jaisalmer, 1942*, p. 24.

22. *Ibid.*

were recognized by the State and were akin to the occupancy rights of tenants in British India.²³

The Revenue Department collected rents directly from the tenants in Tonk and there were no intermediaries.²⁴ But we find in the Administrative Reports that the *Ijara* system was prevalent in Tonk State.²⁵ The *Reports* say, 'any new *Ijara* lease was not given during the year under report as the system has been abolished while Village Nawabganj in Pargana Aligarh has been granted to Sahibzada Iftikhar Ali Khan as a Jagir. The area of the village during the year under report was 584 Bighas, 15 Biswas'. It is also mentioned in the *Reports* that the Jagir and any portion thereof may be resumed back as it is clear from the report that during 'the year under report the following portions were resumed in Pargana Sironj from the Jagir of M. Mohammed Khan—Share of Village Bhayan Kheri of an annual revenue of Rs. 53-9-1 and share of Chatoli Village of an annual revenue of Rs. 67-14-1'.²⁶

In Jhalawar the total cultivated area was 527,224 acres out of which 1,46,095 fell in the Jagir and *Muafi* and the rest was *Khalsa*.²⁷ The jagir system was similar to that prevalent at Kota.

The ruler of the former State of Karauli was the recognized owner of land in the *Khalsa* villages and the overlord in the *Bapoti* and jagir villages held by the nobility and gentry of the State. Some of the villages were bestowed in jagir either on the near members of the ruling family or on other persons for services rendered. In addition, in several villages, there were

23. *Administrative Reports of Kishangarh, 1941-43*. At the close of Samvat 1997 there were in all 547 jagirs which comprised 826 *horses* jagirs and two villages. No succession *Siropas* were granted during Samvat 1998. During Samvat 1999 four *horses* jagirs were brought under *Khalsa* as the holders thereof died heirless.
24. *Progressive Tonk* (a booklet), Abu Collection, Rajasthan University.
25. *Administrative Report of Tonk, 1945-46*.
26. *Ibid*.
27. *Administrative Report of Jhalawar, 1938-39*.

stray plots, held revenue or rent-free generally for services rendered or for charitable purposes. Grants originally made as *Bapotis* have some time been excessively sub-divided, so much so that they were counted as *Raza Muafis* (stray revenue-free plots). All the *Bapotidars* and jagirdars were to pay a fixed revenue which was called *Khandi*. Two-fifths of the total area of the State was under hereditary and temporary jagirs and three-fifths in *Khalsa*. There were a total of 388 villages out of which 214 were *Khalsa* and 174 *Bapoti*. The cultivating tenure was almost *ryotwari*, i.e., tenants enjoyed hereditary rights and could not be ejected from their holdings so long as they paid State demands. Some of the smaller *Bapotidars* as well as the *Raza Muafidars* cultivated their own lands. The Minas were predominant among the cultivators.²⁸

The total number of villages in the former State of Bundi in 1938-39 was 808, out of which 618 were *Khalsa* and 190 in *Jagir* and *Muafi*. In Bundi there were many a petty jagirdar and a jagir was confiscated after the death of the holder. We find that six jagirs came under the management of the State on the death of their holders.²⁹

No jagir system existed in the petty Jat State of Dholpur; only the Raja's near relations were having few villages on rent-free tenure. But the case of Sir Mathura was different where a Bhati Jadon Rajput of the Karauli branch was holding the Jagir and was paying tribute to the State.³⁰

The former State of Alwar had many petty jagirdars, the most important among them being the Thakur of Jaoli. Some *Muafi* lands were granted to the Minas to settle them down in agriculture. Jagirdars maintained *Sawar* for the service of the Durbar.³¹

The jagir system in the former State of Bikaner was based on *Pattedari*. There were three types of jagirdars: (i) *Tazimi Rajvis*—they were the Raja's family and other near relations ;

28. *Administrative Report of Karauli, 1939-40.*

29. *Administrative Report of Bundi, 1938-39.*

30. *Administrative Report of Dholpur, 1938-39.*

31. *Administrative Report of Alwar, 1940.*

(ii) *Thakurs*—other powerful Rajputs; and (iii) *Khawaswals*—who rendered services to the State and in lieu were granted jagirs. They all were to pay State dues to the Durbar.³²

There were 36 important jagirdars in the former State of Kota of whom the majority were of *Haras*. Eight of them, viz.; Indergarh, Bhulwan, Khatoli, Gainta, Karbar, Pipalda, Phusod and Antarda, were known as *Kotris* and were held in suzerainty by the State. But the Durbar paid to Jaipur an annual tribute on account of these fiefs.³³

The ryotwari system was in vogue in the whole of the plains area of the former State of Pratapgarh including jagir villages except in Magroi District which was very thinly populated, by the Bhils. The system of leasing out Magra villages to the Bhils by auction for a maximum period of seven years was in practice.

The tenants in all the villages of the State enjoyed substantial occupancy rights. They were as secured in their land holdings as in the possession of their other property so long as they paid the revenue assessment. It was only in extreme cases that a defaulter in payment of land revenue was dispossessed of his holdings. The system of land tenure fell short of the occupancy rights in full connotation of the term, in the sense that the holding or any part of it could not be alienated by way of mortgage, sale or gift without the permission of the State.³⁴

The worst position was in the States of Jodhpur and Udaipur. In Jodhpur (Marwar) the total area of the State was 36,120 sq. miles out of which roughly 17 per cent was in *Khalsa* and 83 per cent in Jagir.³⁵ As already mentioned the interference of the Jagirs in the administration was endless.

32. *Tazimi Rajvis, Thakurs and Khawaswals of Bikaner* (Abu Collection, Rajasthan University Library).

33. Stratton—*Kota and Haras* (Abu Collection, Rajasthan University), p. 42.

34. *Administrative Report of Pratapgarh, 1943-44.*

35. *Administrative Report of Jodhpur, 1943-44.*

The Feudal System And Public

In the former 18 princedom and three chieftainships which today constitute Rajasthan State, the second largest but economically backward State of the Indian Union, there was no freedom whatsoever. In some of them, the repression let loose on the people was perhaps less than in other States. But all over the common man was in effect the most hated by the tyrants who went by the name of Maharaja, Maharana, Maharawal and so on. If one analyzes the events in these States before Independence, one would conclude that no tyrant ever lived in peace.³⁶ The only part where people enjoyed a limited degree of freedom or 'controlled freedom',³⁷ to be more correct, was, Ajmer-Merwara which was being ruled directly by a British Chief Commissioner.

There was no progressive industrialization in any of the princely States and the masses depended entirely on agriculture. The Rajas and Maharajas were least concerned with the problems of the peasants. The princes were, however, more concerned about getting taxes from the farmers whether the weather favoured them or not in any particular year.³⁸ The peasants themselves were at the mercy of the Jagirdar or Zamindar or *Biswedar* who was the intermediary, and never in the dark history of the princes has it been known that the tiller of the soil got the due return for his sweat and toil round the year. He was always at the mercy of the intermediary whose job it was to strike terror frequently among the peasantry and extract from them (the tenants) all that was required for his own and his Raja's pleasures. It was not uncommon for a jagirdar or a zamindar to evict a peasant from a farm and throw him out of the village under some pretext just before the harvest, only to deprive him of even the meagre share of the crop.³⁹ We have several instances of that type.

There was no rule of law in the jagir areas. The big jagirdars were more or less independent and their jagirs were the

36. Eshwar, L. M., *Sunset and Dawn*, p. 4.

37. *Ibid.*

38. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

39. *Ibid.*

places of rank lawlessness. We will see, as we proceed, that it was in the jagir areas that most of the political troubles had flared up.⁴⁰

There was no court of appeal where a jagirdar could be sued for the excesses committed by him. In such cases even the Political Agent of the British Government refused to interfere. Such instances are many and are mentioned in this work at relevant places. There was almost complete absence of laws guaranting safety of person and property of the people. Under such circumstances it was not inconceivable that the person and property of an individual, in some cases, howsoever remote and rare, were in jeopardy. And although the customs and conventions were generally respected, yet some officers of the State could commit a wrong which may not even come to the notice of the chief.⁴¹

40. *The Times of India*, dated September 30, 1936.

41. Chowdhry, P. S., *Rajasthan Between Two World Wars*, pp. 194-95.

BIJOLIA MOVEMENT— AN UNPARALLELED STORY

Satyagraha movement in Rajasthan started much before Mahatma Gandhi introduced it in Indian politics. But it was Vijai Singh Pathik who gave it a better organized form. He educated the people and prepared them to fight against injustice and inequality. The Great Champaran (Bihar) Movement of peasants was a follow on movement of Bijolia.¹ The story was unparalleled in the history of feudalism and Mahatma Gandhi took note of this and probably became sure of using *satyagraha* as a weapon in Indian politics after Bijolia's successful *Kisan Satyagraha*.

Bijolia,² now in Bhilwara District, was a jagir in the former State of Udaipur. It ranked among the first 16 *Umras* of the State. The Jagirdar was a Parmar Rajput and held on estate of 83 villages on the eastern frontier about hundred miles from Udaipur.³ There was no written law regarding revenue, police, judiciary, etc., in the estate. Everything was decided on the basis of old usage or custom or the eccentricity or sweet will of jagirdars. The *kisans*, therefore, suffered the same hardships to which their ancestors had been subjected. The relationship between the ruler and the ruled—the ruler here was the Jagirdar because the Maharana was an extremely distant entity—was cordial only occasionally when the chief was either in a happy mood or happened to be a good-natured man or when there was a marriage in his family and all the people were invited to the wedding dinner.⁴ Otherwise, the peasants had to pay heavy

1. Eshwar, p. 23.

2. Bijolia is 30 miles south-west from Bundi in the Arrawali Ranges and 62 miles from Kota Railway Junction.

3. *Chiefs and Leading Families in Rajputana*, p. 30.

4. *Pathik ka Bayan*; also Chowdhry, P. S., *Rajasthan Between Two World Wars*, p. 202.

revenue. Its lowest rate was one-fourth of the produce and the highest one-half. The soil of the place was generally not very productive. The majority of the people were very poor and destitute, heavily in debt and had never emerged from their miserable plight for several generations.⁵

Kisans paid 86 different types of taxes, e.g., *Tikas*, *Lags* and *Bhents*, which custom had sanctioned and the Jagirdar had been collecting. These are too numerous to mention but a few may be referred to. *Bighoti* was the tax which over and above the land revenue the peasant had to pay for every bigha of land under his cultivation. It was generally one anna per bigha. *Halloti* was another tax which was paid per plough at the rate of four annas per plough. *Singhoti* was a tax on cattle of all kind except cows at the rate of half an anna per cattle head. *Baisakhen* was a tax charged collectively from a village as rent for the place where the cattle rested in the vicinity of the village. On an average it was about Rs. 15 per village.⁶ Besides these taxes, there was a marriage tax collected on the basis of land-holdings on the eve of the marriage of the daughter or son of the Jagirdar. The *Tika* tax was realized when a succession took place in the Jagirdar's family. *Ghani-Kallali*, *Dhari-Janani*, *Kagli*, etc., were the taxes which were realized from the liquor manufacturers, oil pressures, adulterators, etc. In short, the peasants were under heavy burden financially and if a cultivator failed to pay the demands he was meted out very harsh treatment.⁷

Bijolia's geographical and topographical position has also played an important role in the agitation. Bijolia, as has already been described, has a common border with the former States of Gwalior, Bundi, Kota, etc. The Dhakars of these States came to settle down here with their other brethren and relations. It is known for its scenic beauty and is called Upper Maal in Udaipur.⁸

5. Chowdhry, p. 203.

6. *Ibid.*

7. Foreign Political 596-P (Sec.) I, 1922-23.

8. *Udaipur Records; Bijolia Sambandhi Kagzat* (Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner).

First Phase

Unbearably excessive revenue demands compelled the peasants to beg for mercy. It so happened that in 1897 all the peasants of Upper Maal gathered at village Girdharpura on the occasion of the *Mrityubhoj* (dinner given on the thirteenth day of a funeral) of Gangaram Dhakar's father. They naturally discussed their grievances, and it was decided, by the elders of the clan, that Nanji Patel of Berisal Niwas and Thakri Patel of Gopal Niwas should be sent to Udaipur in deputation to put their grievances before the Maharana. After continuous appealing for six to seven months Maharana Fateh Singh deputed an Assistant Revenue Officer for an inquiry.

The Assistant Revenue Officer came to Bijolia and started an inquiry. He asked the Jagirdar if he were authorized to levy and realize *lags* and, if so, to show some documentary proof. Having no written proof, the Jagirdar could not make any reply. For obvious reasons he did not allow any *kisan* to meet the Revenue Officer. The inquiry report went against the Jagirdar. But the Maharana did not care much for the report except that one or two *lags* were removed and a warning issued. The Jagirdar now made use of diplomacy. He won over a few *kisans* by creating them *Numberdars* and *Patels*. Nanji and Thakri were exiled from Bijolia and their farms destroyed. And it was only after a few years that they could come back, after paying a heavy fine. In 1899-1900 there was a great famine. Rao of Bijolia took advantage of this. He constructed a dam and gave free rations to the *kisan* leaders. Thus he weakened *kisan* unity.

Flushed with victory, the Jagirdar imposed a new *lag*—*Chanwari*—to be paid at the time of the marriage of a *kisan's* daughter at the rate of Rs. 5. As a mark of protest *kisans* stopped marrying their daughters. And, in 1905, they accompanied by about 200 girls of marriageable age met the Rao and demanded that their marriage should be allowed to be solemnized without payment of the *Chanwari lag*, but the Rao refused. To retaliate, the *kisans* decided not to plough the lands of Bijolia but of Gwalior, Bundi and Kota so that the Jagirdar got no revenue. The Jagirdar yielded and called the

kisans and reached an agreement with them. According to the agreement the *Chanwari lag* was withdrawn, share of the crop to be given to the Rao was fixed at two-fifths of their produce and *Kunta* was decided. The *kisans* in return promised not to keep the lands untilled.

Rao Kishan Singh died and his near relation, Prithvi Singh, became the Jagirdar in 1906. Whatever relaxations allowed by the late Jagirdar were all withdrawn by new Thakur on the pretext of *Talwar lag* (Succession Tax) being paid to the Maharana. *Kisans* resented this and other unbearable acts of the Jagirdar under the leadership of Fatehkaran Charan, Brahmadeo and Sadhu Sitaram Das. In 1913, about 1,000 *kisans* marched to the palace of the Jagirdar to meet him but he refused to see them. So the peasants decided not to plough Bijolia's lands and instead proposed to take Gwalior, Bundi and Mewar's *Khalsa* land on rent. Consequently all the lands of Bijolia remained untilled. There was a complete famine. The *Thikana* authorities resorted to suppressive measures and the Maharana, alarmed at the awakening of the *kisans*, sided with the *Thakur*. Fatehkaran and Brahmadeo were exiled and many others put into jail. The movement was crushed but it ignited a spark of reaction in the minds of peasants of Bijolia.

This was the background of Bijolia *kisans* before Vijai Singh Pathik assumed command of the peasant movement. There are a few papers giving information about this background in the State records preserved in the *Bijolia Sambandhi Kagzat file* at the Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner. Other useful material on the subject is available in *Baba Sitaram Das ke Sansmaran* and Manik Lal Verma's Private Papers. These are most valuable because the former was connected with the movement and the latter was in the service of the *Thikana* having personally seen all that had happened. A copy of *Baba Sitaram Das ke Sansmaran* is available with the *Shodhak*, Jaipur, and the Private Papers of Manik Lal Verma have been incorporated in his biography by Shankar Sahai Saxena entitled *Jo Desh Ke Liye Jiye—Yasho Gatha Shri Manik Lal Verma*.

Second Phase

Vijai Singh Pathik attached with Shachindra Sanyal's Party was a revolutionary and believed that by creating terror they would be able to achieve India's independence. Vijai Singh Pathik, whose real name was Bhoop Singh, was a Gujar of Bulandshahr District of Uttar Pradesh. He was a member of Ras Behari Bose and Shachindra Sanyal's revolutionary party. Rao Gopal Singh of Kharwa, Thakur Kesari Singh Barhat and his son, Pratap Singh Barhat, etc., were the members from Rajputana. They all were under arrest. Bhoop Singh on hearing that a warrant of arrest had been issued against him in the Delhi Bomb Case fled away from Tatgarh jail. The British Government of India sent a number of intelligence officers and a number of armed policemen to track him down under the instructions of the Central Government. The Mewar Police also was co-operating with them. But Bhoop Singh dodged everybody. He now assumed the name of Vijai Singh Pathik and started a school in Kankroli. A good many ambitious Charans and Rajputs felt attracted to his personality and gathered around him to form a sort of society. In the meanwhile his two other associates, who had also dodged the authorities and escaped from Tatgarh jail, had been apprehended. He tried to rescue them but before he could reach the place of apprehension they surrendered. Kankroli, already a place of Hindu pilgrimage, by now had become a place of pilgrimage for the C.I.D. informers. Pathik, therefore, left it and moved towards Chittor and resided there for some time in a village named Ochri.

The *Thikana* of Bijolia was under minority rule at that time. Ishwaridas, the *Munshim*, was a small jagirdar himself. He was the son-in-law of Thakur Kesari Singh, a famous revolutionary, who had just been acquitted in a bomb case. Strangely enough he was appointed by the Mewar Durbar to manage the *Thikana* of Bijolia. As Ishwaridas was politically minded he suggested to Sadhu Sitaram Das to meet Vijai Singh Pathik and invite him to assume the leadership of the *Kisan* movement. Consequently, Sadhu Sitaram Das and Magan Lal went to Chittor to attend the annual session of the Vidya Pracharini Sabha. They met Vijai Singh Pathik in Ochri

village and invited him to assume the command of the Bijolia agitation. In him they found a real leader and in them he found reliable and faithful followers. So at the end of 1915 Vijai Singh Pathik arrived in Bijolia.

After moving into Bijolia he started a school and organized a *sewa samiti* through which he created a new spirit in the town and surrounding villages. He, with the help of the *Naib Munsrim*, Dungar Singh Bhati, studied the *Thikana* records and found that there was no justifiable basis for the taxes and *lags*.⁹

He along with Sadhu Sitaram Das and Manik Lal Verma visited villages during the nights and studied the situation. They found that the *kisans* of Upper Maal were courageous and full of enthusiasm but lacked leadership and, in its absence, a good and strong organization. He urged the peasants to form themselves into an organization. He asked Manik Lal Verma to resign from the *Thikana* service and work amidst the *kisans*. Manik Lal Verma, accordingly, resigned and opened a school at Umaji Kheda. Pathik composed some poems in Mewati and asked Manik Lal Verma and Sadhu Sitaram Das to recite them to the *kisans*. The poems had the desired effect.¹⁰

The year 1916 was a very bad year for Bijolia.¹¹ The monsoon had virtually failed. The crop was very poor but even then the *Thikana* authorities insisted on collecting the usual revenue along with the war fund. Under the leadership of Pathik the *kisans* refused to pay anything. His strategy was to ask the peasants to refuse to pay any revenue or taxes and to flood the *Mahakma Khas* of Mewar with petitions against the oppressive taxes and revenue.¹² The matter was reported to the Maharana of Udaipur. He wanted to concede certain demands

9. *Pathikji ka Bayan* (A printed booklet, made available to the author by Satya Narain Pareek, Director of Bharatiya Vidyamandir Shodh Pratisthan, Bikaner.)

10. *Diary of Manik Lal Verma*.

11. Chowdhry, P. S., p. 205.

12. *The Hindustan Times*, dated June 25, 1927.

of the Bijolia peasants but the Political Officers did not allow him to do this. They argued that this would encourage the peasants to multiply their demands and would affect not only other parts of the State of Mewar but also might have repercussions all over Rajputana.¹³

The matter was reported to the Resident and the *Munsrim* was ordered to arrest Pathik and send him to Udaipur. But as the *Munsrim* of the place was already in collusion with Pathik, he allowed him to escape.¹⁴ In his absence the leadership of the movement was taken up by Manik Lal Verma¹⁵ assisted by Jaisingh Dhakar, Ghanshyam Joshi, Bhanwar Lal Swarnkar, etc. Pathik moved towards Umaji Khera and hid himself in a deserted house and conducted the movement from there. After it, a miserable plight befell the *kisans* and they decided not to plough the *Thikana* lands. But Pathik argued with them and asked them to revise their decision and plough the land. This shows how far-sighted and constructive a leader he was. He called Manaji Patel and asked him to become the Sarpanch. So the *kisans* appointed their own panchayats, looked after their crops, organized a *Charkha* movement, plied the *Karghas*, built up small industries, and became self-reliant.¹⁶ They, in a sense, ran a parallel government in Bijolia.¹⁷

When conciliation was ruled out as a solution, the State and *Thikana* authorities resorted to oppressive methods to suppress the movement. Trench, the Settlement Officer, even ordered firing in the villages of Raita and Tilasman where many people fell victim to bullets.¹⁸ But unluckily for the State authorities, these oppressive steps instead of weakening the movement further strengthened it.

13. Chowdhry, P. S., p. 205.

14. *Ibid.*

15. Saxena, S. S., *Jo Desh ke Liye Jiye Yashogatha Manik Lal Verma*, p. 27; Chowdhry, P. S., p. 205.

16. *The Bombay Chronicle*, dated, June 18, 1927.

17. Rajputana Agency Records, 1921, No. 69 List I, NAI.

18. *Ibid.*, dated June 28, 1927.

In November, 1917, a revolution took place in Russia, where *Kisan Mazdoors* violently overthrew the Czar Government, and established a new regime, a proletariat Government. This was a very hot topic in the contemporary newspapers. Manik Lal Verma and his associates daily broadcast to the *kisans* the news about the Russian Revolution. But this did not have the intended effect of inciting the *kisans* to follow the example and change the Government through violent means though it did help in encouraging the *kisans* so that they did not lose their morale.

Begar was rampant in the area. At the time of the Resident's tour in the area, one Girdhari Kumhar died of cold. When the Rao's mother went to the Mataji Temple about 300 carts of the *kisans* were taken into begar. The *kisans*, resentful, decided not to suffer *begar* any more. In September, 1918, when the *Kamdar* of *Thikana* asked Govindpura's Narayan Patel for Ghisa (bringing sticks from the jungles) he refused. He was arrested and the news of his arrest spread and alarmed the *kisans* of whole of Upper Maal. The next morning about 2,000 *kisans* assembled in Bijolia and raised the slogan, 'Release Narayan Patel or put all of us into Jail'. The *Munsrim* released Narayan Patel.¹⁹

Vijai Singh came very close to Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi and wrote some articles on Bijolia in the *Pratap* of Kanpur edited by Vidyarthi. Sometimes when Pathik happened to be in Kanpur he edited *Pratap*. Thus, Bijolia attracted the attention of national leaders. Pathik alongwith Manik Lal Verma, Sadhu Sitaram Das and others attended the Congress Session of 1918 and came very close to Lokmanya Tilak, who afterwards wrote many articles in his *Maratha* regarding Bijolia. In 1921, Pathik again attended the Congress Session where he met Mahatma Gandhi. A resolution on the Bijolia Movement was to be moved and expected to be adopted but was dropped on the interference of Madan Mohan Malviya, who assured Pathik he would intercede in the matter as he was very close to the Maharana of Udaipur.

The *Thikana* administration remained paralyzed for about six years and the State authorities simply felt baffled. All their methods had failed to pacify the people. Ultimately, the authorities called a conference in Bijolia itself about 1922 to settle the dispute through peaceful means. This was attended, on behalf of the Political Department, by Holland (Agent to the Governor-General) and Wilkinson (Political Resident). The State was represented by Prabhat Chandra Chatterji, the Diwan of the State, and Pandit Brijlal Kaushik. The *Thikana* was represented by Kanwar Hiralal, Foujdar Tej Singh and Master Zalim Singh, whereas the people were represented by Ram Narain Chowdhry, Manik Lal Verma and Motichand. Quite in keeping with the British diplomacy, Holland asked Devaji, an old veteran, to preside over the proceedings.

Most frank discussions were held in the most congenial and friendly atmosphere. Finally it was decided that small lags should not be paid and *begar* shall not be extorted, except in the case of the State Chief to which the people agreed.²⁰ Thus a great fight was won. The information on the subject is contained in the *raconteurs* of Baba Sitaram Das,²¹ *memoirs* of late Manik Lal Verma²² which are a very valuable source of information about the peasants' plight. Few *geets* were composed to encourage the peasants: Manik Lal Verma's *Panchira*,²³ Vijai Singh Pathik's *Loke Geets*,²⁴ Bhanwarlal Swarnkar's²⁵

20. *Bijolia Sambandhi Kagzat*; (Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner); Chowdhry, R. N., *Vartman Rajasthan*, p. 92-97.

21. *Baba Sitaramdas ke Sansmaran* MSS is available at Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner, and at the *Shodhak*, a research journal (Jaipur).

22. *Manik Lal Verma ke Sansmaran* available at the Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner, and with Narayani Devi, M.P., widow of late Manik Lal Verma at 219, North Avenue, New Delhi.

23. Manik Lal Verma's *Panchira* available at *Shodhak*, Jaipur.

24. Vijai Singh Pathik's *geets*, compilation is available with Janki Devi Pathik, widow of Pathik, teacher in a local girls school at Mathura.

25. Bhanwarlal Swarnkar's songs are available at *Shodhak*, Jaipur.

songs and Prem Chand's *geets*²⁶ are important, as they were among the leaders and represent the suffering of *kisans*.

The settlement and references are well preserved in Government records, like *Foreign Political Proceedings*, *Fortnightly Reports*, *Settlement Reports*, etc.; Government records available at the National Archives of India, New Delhi, and *Bijolia Sambandhi Kagzats* are available at the Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner. The information is also available in the contemporary newspapers like the *Maratha*,²⁷ *Abhyudaya*,²⁸ *Pratap*,²⁹ and others.³⁰

Last Phase

However, the *Kisan Panchayat* was anxious to see the 1922 agreement implemented while the *Thikana* was busy devising ways how to dishonour it. In 1923, Bijolia Thakur's marriage took place. According to the custom prevailing, the *kisans* wanted to organize a feast in honour of the couple but the *Thikana* authorities expected *begar*. This the *kisans* refused at the instance of ; Pathik and Manik Lal Verma. The Rao did not accept their invitation to attend the feast.

The immediate action of the *Thikana* authorities was to arrest Sadhu Sitaram Das and Manik Lal Verma and others on the charges of inciting the people not to offer *begar*, make *holi* (bon-fire) of foreign clothes, etc. But the *Thikana* authorities could not prove the charges, so they were released.³¹

From 1923 to 1926 there were no good crops. The *Kisans* were heavily indebted to the *Mahajans*. *Kisan Panchayats*, therefore,

26. Prem Chand's *geets* were more popular, people still remember:

Maan maan Mewara Rana Praja Pukare Rana man re,

Bijoliari dukh ki gathan likh likh raiyat thakire.

27. *Maratha* (Marathi), available at Saraswati Library, Fatehpur-Shekhawati.

28. *Abhyudaya*, available at Private Paper Collections, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

29. *Pratap*, Kanpur, available from 1913 to 1940-41 at Saraswati Library, Fatehpur-Shekhawati.

30. *Arjun*, *Navyug Sandesh*, *Tyag Bhumi*, *Vishal Bharat*, *Young Rajasthan*, *Princely India*, available at Fatehpur, and the *Bombay Chronicle* dated February 9, 1921.

31. Private Papers of Manik Lal Verma.

appealed to the *Mahakma Khas* at Udaipur for help but in vain. On February 11, 1926, Trench, the Settlement Officer, came to Bijolia. The *Kisans* and *Thikana* authorities accepted him as mediator. He, after hearing them, gave a judgment, according to which some relief in the debts and land revenue was granted to the *kisans*. But Manik Lal Verma and a few others were arrested from Umaji ka Khera, at the instance of Trench. Though Vijai Singh Pathik was released from Udaipur jail his Mewar entry was prohibited. So Ram Narain Chowdhry and Sadhu Sitaram Das conducted the *kisan* movement.³²

The year 1927 brought fresh troubles. The Rao of Bijolia, ignoring the lesson of the past events, also enhanced the revenue and other taxes, thus violating the terms of the agreement which had been reached in 1922. All the protests of the *kisans* were ignored and once again the *Thikana* was thrown into confusion and trouble.³³

The State auctioned the land to others dispossessing the Dhakars. The *kisans* in protest went on a *satyagraha*, and were treated with unprecedented cruelty. In the jagir area of Bijolia some 3,000 peasants were arrested in batches of 10 to 700; scores of them were thrown into jails, hundreds were flogged and tormented in various other ways.³⁴ To suppress the peasant movement the Maharana's Government declared Dhakar Panchayat an unlawful association.³⁵ Vijai Singh Pathik was free yet he was under prohibitory orders not to enter Mewar. Ram Narain Chowdhry and Manik Lal Verma differed with Vijai Singh Pathik over the role of the Rajasthan Seva Sangh. So the two were not ready to help the *kisans* if Vijai Singh Pathik was also there. So Pathik, in the interest of the *kisans*, resigned from the Kisan Panchayat³⁵ and

32. Private Papers of Ram Narain Chowdhry, available at his residence at Pal Bichala, Ajmer.

33. The *Bombay Chronicle*, May 27, 1927.

34. *Ibid.*

35. Fortnightly Reports, File No. 421 P. of 1927.

36. Kisan Panchayat Session was held in Gwalior territory near Bijolia. Fortnightly Reports, File No. 421 P. of 1927.

Manik Lal Verma assumed his place. As soon as Pathik resigned from the leadership lands of the agitating Dhakars were confiscated and allotted to new *kisans*.³⁷ The Dhakars warned the new allottees not to plough the land, and if they did they should be ready for the consequences.³⁸ Hari Bhau Upadhyaya was deputed to Udaipur. He had an interview with the Maharana and Trench.³⁹ An agreement was reached, according to which the farmers agreed to pay the arrears of land revenue, and the State agreed to abolish all the extra and increased taxes and restored the land to the original owners.⁴⁰ All the source material for the above incident, besides Government records, is contained in the *memoirs* of late Hari Bhau Upadhyaya.⁴¹ Some stray references are also available in the Private Papers of Hira Lal Shastri.⁴² This is in addition to the Private Papers of Manik Lal Verma, Baba Sitaram Das ke Sansmaran and Private Papers of Vijai Singh Pathik, already referred to earlier.

Upper Maal ko Danko, a hand-written newspaper edited and published by Nagarchi, is also an important information source for the *kisan* movement of Bijolia. Later on, it is seen that it was also published in litho. This Nagarchi was none else than Sadhu Sitaram Das who was publishing the paper under an assumed name. A few copies of the newspaper are available in *Bijolia Sambandhi Kagzat*.⁴³

37. *Ibid.*

38. *Ibid.*

39. *Tyag Bhumi*, dated May 1, 1931; July 3, 1931.

40. *Ibid.*

41. Private Papers of Hari Bhau Upadhyaya, available in the Private Paper Collection Section of Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi. In Hari Bhau Upadhyaya's *Tyag Bhumi*, a newspaper published from Ajmer (in the issue of Ashadh Chakram, Vikarm Samvat 1986 (1929 A.D.) all the details regarding the Second Phase of Bijolia Movement have been described.

42. Private Papers of Hira Lal Shastri, available at the Private Paper Collection Section of Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

43. Available at the Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner.

BEGU AND BUNDI

Agitation in Begu

Begu was a small *Thikana* (jagir) in Mewar near Bijolia. Popularly known as *Attari* it was held by Chandawat Sisodiya Rajput. The jagir constituted about 128 villages.¹

The Bijolia movement pioneered new movements. The agitation of the peasants continued even after 1922 in Mewar. The most affected jagir area was Begu, where the cultivators virtually rose in rebellion against the *Thikana*. The Ravda Thakur of the *Thikana* resorted to violent methods and threatened the *satyagrahis* that they would be shot, but when one young man, Ram Niwas Sharma, a worker of the Rajasthan Seva Sangh came forward and challenged the *Thakur* to open fire at him, the *Thakur*, a whimsical man, cooled down.² As a result of the efforts of the Seva Sangh and Manik Lal Verma, the peasants were awakening gradually and at one stage pledged to abstain from drinking and wear *Swadeshi*. The people did not give up untouchability, but were joining the Panchayat taking interest in its affairs and attending meetings. Some were even ambitious to become the Panchayat President. The conservative jagirdars could not tolerate all this and adopted a policy of repression to crush the agitation. Not only the peasants of the villages became their target but even the women were insulted.³

1. *Chiefs and Leading Families in Rajputana*, p. 30.

2. Chowdhry, R.N., *Vartman Rajasthan*, pp. 90-92.

3. Foreign Political Proceedings, File No. 596-P (Secret)—I of 1922-23, Chowdhry, R. N., pp. 90-91. R. N., Chowdhry gives a detailed account of the repressive measures adopted by the *Thikana* and the manner in which women were dishonoured and insulted, pp. 115-18.

The cultivators, therefore, approached Vijai Singh Pathik at Ajmer and acquainted him with their grievances. Accordingly, on behalf of the Rajasthan Seva Sangh, Ram Narain Chowdhry was sent to Begu for an on-the-spot enquiry. He addressed the Panchayat and a largely attended public meeting near a village. Under the instructions of Seth Amrit Lal, *Kamdar* of Begu, the *Thikana* police was sent under the supervision of Laxmi Narayan Ojha, and as soon as Ram Narain Chowdhry completed his speech and left the place, the police opened fire on the peaceful cultivators.⁴ The atrocities committed by the police and Seth Amrit Lal, the local Seth of Begu, reached their climax. So the peasants approached Trench, Revenue Commissioner, Mewar. He, instead of taking any step against the *Thikana* authorities, proceeded with his troops to Govindpura village on July 13, 1923, and besieged it. Nearly 500 *kisans* assembled at Govindpura to meet Trench and to request him to impart justice. They were led by Roopaji of Jawanagar and Kirpaji of Amarpura. Both of them were Dhakars. He refused to meet them, and ordered to set the villages on fire and then resorted to firing. It is believed that two persons were killed and several wounded.⁵ Both Roopaji and Kirpaji were shot dead. About 500 people were arrested alongwith 100 children, who were severely beaten up and driven to Begu.⁶ During the repression the soldiers entered the houses and assaulted women in the most shameful manner,⁷ with the result

4. Foreign Political Proceedings, File No. 596-P (Secret)—I of 1922-23, National Archives of India; Chowdhry, R. N., pp. 73-75.

5. *Ibid.*

6. During the repression, Ghanhsyam Sharma, a worker of the Rajasthan Seva Sangh was also arrested, and kept in prison for 14 months without trial. Later on, on February 25, 1924, he was released. During his imprisonment he was brutally tortured. After his release he gave a long statement about the police atrocities committed on him. *Tarun Rajasthan*, dated November 16, 1924.

7. Pathik's statement before the Mewar Court, p. 94; Chowdhry, R. N., *op. cit.*, pp. 90-92; Kela, *Deshi Rajyan ki Jan Jagriti*, pp. 68-69.

that the cultivators were so much excited that they even decided to kill the Ravda Thakur.⁸

To sustain the morale of Begu cultivators, Vijay Singh Pathik alongwith Hariji secretly managed to reach Begu, where they stayed with a Dhakar; but they were soon arrested and were produced before a Special Bench⁹ constituted for the purpose at Udaipur. They were charged with the offence of committing anti-State activities, distributing seditious literature and disobeying the orders of the Mewar Maharana.¹⁰ During the trial Pathik emphasized that to have a 'sentiment of patriotism is not an offence' and 'the people have a right to rise against the cruelties committed on them'.¹¹ Ultimately he was acquitted. But the Mewar Government under special powers awarded him five years' imprisonment. In 1928 Pathik was released and was externed from Mewar.¹²

The atrocities committed by the Mewar State and *Thikana* officials on the peaceful cultivators were widely condemned and open letters were addressed to the Mewar officials.¹³ The voice of protest was heard even in British Parliament.¹⁴

8. The work was entrusted to Birdi Singh, Jai Singh and Ram Singh, the young workers of Begu. But the plan could not be implemented, as all the three were arrested, and sent to Jaipur, where Ram Singh was interned at Rajnagar, and Jai Singh and Birdi Singh were interned in Begu without trial, Chowdhry, R. N., *op. cit.*, pp. 135-37.
9. The members of the Bench were Sarvashri Tribhuvan Nath Shivpuri, Ratilal Antani and Dalchand Agrawal.
10. Proceedings of the Tribunal, *Tarun Rajasthan*, dated March 30, 1924.
11. Pathikji's statement before the Mewar Court. (*Pathik ji ka Bayan*).
12. Judgment in the Pathik Case; Deepak, *Jab Janta Jagi Thi*, p. 10; Chowdhry, R. N., *op. cit.*, pp. 115-118, 137-140.
13. *Tarun Rajasthan* dated June 1, 1924.
14. The labour member, Mr. Walter Baker, asked a question about the Mewar State, repressive policy and about the atrocities committed by the *Thikana* police on the peasants of Bijolia, Begu and Bundi to which the S.S.S.I. replied, 'I am writing, to the Governor-General'. In *Workers Weekly* (a British newspaper) dated December. 12, 1924, the news appeared under the title 'Rajasthan in British Parliament', and an open inquiry into the incidents was demanded. *Leader* dated June 23, 1924; *Tarun Rajasthan* dated June 29, 1924.

Peasant Agitation Spreads to Other Parts of Mewar

The cultivators' 'movement', as it may be termed, thus began to spread far and wide in the territory of Mewar. At the holy place of Matrikundia, thousands of Kisans decided, in 1921, to defy the State authorities until their grievances were redressed. In addition to the demand of abolishing all 'lagats' and 'bhet-begar' they also demanded that 'the revenue settlement should be considered as the twenty years' period fixed by Wingate in the eighties of the 19th century had long expired, that the cess collected for education and public health alongwith the revenue should be only half an anna and should be utilized for opening more schools and hospitals in the villages, that the taxes and duties levied on the sale of cattle and on the grazing of cattle in the pastures, etc., should be annulled'. Thus the situation was becoming critical. The sum and substance of the agitation has been narrated by Wilkinson who stated, 'Mewar is becoming a hot bed of lawlessness. Seditious emissaries were teaching the people that all men are equal. The land belongs to the peasants and not to the State or landlords. It is significant that the people are being urged to use the vernacular equivalent of the word "comrade" instead of customary honorific styles of address. His Highness is said to have been threatened to be meted the fate of "Czar". In the end, Wilkinson added, 'the movement is mainly anti-Maharana, but it might soon become anti-British and spread to adjoining British area'.¹⁶

According to the British Resident, Maharana Fateh Singh himself was responsible for all this lawlessness. As he had failed to control it, it was suggested to the Viceroy that the Maharana 'should be pressed to resign'. Accordingly, the Maharana was asked to delegate the powers in favour of his son or otherwise be prepared to face an inquiry.¹⁷ This placed

15. *Rajputana Agency Records*, 1921, No. 69, List I, National Archives of India.

16. *Ibid.*

17. Letter dated July 17, 1921, from R. E. Holland, Agent to the Governor-General in Rajputana, to Maharana Fateh Singh. *Tarun Rajasthan*, dated August 4, 1924.

the Maharana in a very critical position and there was no other alternative except to accept the British advice and abdicate in favour of his son. To avoid contingencies, the Maharana unsuccessfully offered a bribe of rupees two lakhs to the Agent to the Governor-General in Rajputana through a banker on July 15, 1921, 'to extricate him from the difficulty'.¹⁸

Parsoli,¹⁹ Mandesra²⁰ and Begu²¹ in Mewar (Udaipur) faced a serious oppression at the hands of the authorities. The source material for the Begu affairs are the *memoirs* of the leaders like Haribhai Kinkar,²² Ram Narain Chowdhry,²³ Durga Prasad Choudhary²⁴ and Arjun Lal Sethi.²⁵ Besides these, the contemporary newspapers like the *Bombay Chronicle*,²⁶ the *Daily Express*²⁷ and the *Pioneer*²⁸ also supply useful information and represent public opinion. *Memoirs* of Manik Lal Verma left in the form of a private diary and of Hari Bhau Upadhyaya are also good sources.

Parsoli—Fight Through Panchayats

Parsoli, another centre of the crisis, was an estate in the former State of Mewar held by a Chauhan Rajput and comprised to 40 villages. It is situated about 28 miles to the

18. Letter dated July 17, 1921, from Holland to the Viceroy and Governor-General of India, *Rajputana Agency Records*, 1921, No. 69, List I, National Archives of India.
19. Parsoli, a place in Chittor District.
20. Mandesra, now in Chittor District.
21. Begu was also a primer jagir of Udaipur, now a place in Chittor District.
22. *Memoirs of Haribhai Kinkar* available with the Shodhak, journal, Jaipur.
23. *Memoirs of Ram Narain Chowdhry* are available with him at Palbichala, Ajmer.
24. *Memoirs of Durga Prasad Choudhary* are published in *Navjyoti* dated August 15, 1973.
25. *Arjun Lal Sethi's Memoirs* are available with Sethi's family at Jaipur.
26. The *Bombay Chronicle*, dated February 9, 1927.
27. The *Daily Express*, dated February 16, 1922. Cuttings are available at B. Vidyamandir Shodh Pratisthan, Bikaner.
28. The *Pioneer*, dated February 27, 1922.

north-east of Chittor.²⁹ Peasants of the place organized their own Panchayats under the direction of the Rajasthan Seva Sangh. Brahmchari Harji, a member of the Sangh, was their leader. The Panchayats stopped neither taxes nor *hansal* but only demanded that the *lags* and *begar* should be withdrawn. They also persuaded some of the *kisans* and other ryots to espouse their cause. This alarmed the *Thikana* authorities and Seva Sangh workers were asked to wind up the Panchayats and close down the offices. On their refusal the *Thikana* authorities declared the Panchayats unlawful and sent armed police accompanied by professional criminals. These hirelings attacked the villages, and males, females and children were all beaten up without discrimination. Harji was arrested and sent to Chittor. The *kisans* approached Pathik at Ajmer who filed a suit against the *Thikana* in the Mewar court.³⁰

In Amargarh, the organization of Panchayats was very strong. As precautionary measures the army was called in and two of the villages were vacated to accomodate the army. All this was done to terrorize the *kisans*. On behalf of the Rajasthan Seva Sangh, Anjana Devi Chowdhry, wife of Ram Narain Chowdhry, and Manik Lal Verma assured the authorities that no violent incident would take place from the side of the *kisans* but all in vain.

Anjana Devi Chowdhry and Manik Lal Verma were arrested. Vindu Lal Bhattacharya, an official of the *Thikana* had Gagunar village besieged and many people were beaten up by the police. When this was reported to Vijai Singh Pathik at Ajmer, he appealed to the Maharana for justice.³¹

However, Vindu Lal Bhattacharya was authorized to negotiate an agreement on behalf of the Mewar Durbar. When reached, it provided for withdrawal of 23 *lags*, measures for protection against thefts, settlement and fixation of land revenue, right of organizing Panchayats on the pattern prescribed by British

29. *Chiefs and Leading Families in Rajputana.*

30. *Pathikji ka Bayan*, p. 91.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 92.

India's law and revenue at three-fourths of the Rabi.³² *Pathikji ka Bayan* is the main source of information for these incidents besides the sketchy references in Government records.

Mandesra, a village in Bhainsrorgarh *Thikana*,³³ had also witnessed an incident of agrarian movement under the leadership of Lakmaji Bhil who was very popular amongst his tribe. The Panchayat system had also been introduced here by the Rajasthan Seva Sangh and was very strong. Once nearly 100 *Thikana* servants planned to raid Mandesra to take away the agricultural produce. The Panchayat somehow came to know about the plans of the Jagirdar, so they informed Manik Lal Verma at Umaji ka Khera³⁴ about this. So about 50 young *kisans* were ready to die if it came to resisting the authorities. But Manik Lal Verma had hastened to the rescue of the *kisans*. The *Thikana* authorities yielded and the *kisans* were saved.³⁵

Agitation in Bundi

Like Bijolia and Begu, the cultivators of Bundi had also to pay a number of *lagats* and they were subjected to forced labour, i.e., *begar*. By an State order, public meetings, national songs and slogans had been banned. On June 15, 1922, a number of cultivators were arrested and their women were so humiliated and illtreated that two of them died.³⁶ The Rajasthan Seva Sangh took this up and sent Ram Narain Chowdhry

32. *Ibid.*

33. Bhainsrorgarh was a *Thikana* in the former State of Mewar held by a Sisodia of Champawat clan, a holding of an estate of 127 villages. It is situated at the confluence of rivers Bambi and Chambal. The place is, as said by Col. Tod, to take its name from a merchant named Bhainsa and Rora Banjara or carrier to and to have been built to protect caravans. It commanded the trade route from Mewar into Haroti.

34. Umaji ka Khera, the then residence of Manik Lal Verma, is about 18 to 20 miles from Mandesra.

35. *Navin Rajasthan*, a periodical published from Ajmer, gives details of the incident.

36. Foreign Political Proceedings, File No. 596-P (Secret)—I of 1922-23, Kela, *Deshi Rajyon ki jan jagriti*, p. 75.

and Satya Bhakat to conduct an on-the-spot enquiry. They reported that the *begar* system was frequently operative there, no civil liberties existed and although the war had long come to a close, contributions for the 'war fund' continued to be collected.³⁷ It was further brought to their notice that the peasants had organized a meeting on May 30, 1922, to voice their grievances but were forcibly dispersed by State officials and the police. On May 31, 1922, the weekly Panchayat of the cultivators held at Dabi observed, 'The State police committed every sort of cruelty on the womenfolk and they outraged their chastity also'. Pandit Nainuram Sharma, who was a moving spirit behind this agitation, was, therefore, arrested³⁸ in December, 1922, and on May 10, 1923, was awarded four years' imprisonment, and on a charge of anti-State and seditious activities his entry into the State was banned.³⁹ The situation was, therefore, becoming serious day by day. In May, 1923, the police opened fire on peaceful cultivators and the *satyagrahis* including women were mercilessly beaten up. One Nanak Bhil died on the spot.⁴⁰ The Rajasthan Seva Sangh gave wide publicity to the police atrocities committed in Bundi, as a result of which some grievances were redressed, though a ban was imposed on the entry of the members of the Seva Sangh to Bundi State.⁴¹ *Abhyudaya* reveals that an anna per every rupee paid as revenue was to be collected as war fund at the time of revenue collection. People never wanted to pay it.

37. Chowdhry, R. N., *op. cit.*; Kela *op. cit.*, p. 75.

38. Foreign Political Proceedings, File No. 596-P (Secret) —I of 1922-23; *Tarun Rajasthan*, dated January 13, 1924.

39. Foreign Political Proceedings, File No. 74-P of 1924, National Archives of India; *Tarun Rajasthan* dated January 13, 1924. Pandit Nainuram Sharma established the Praja Mandal in Kota but soon he was killed by a Kota citizen.

40. Kela, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-79; Foreign Political Proceedings, File No. 74-P of 1924.

41. Chowdhry, R. N., *op. cit.* pp. 103-04; Foreign Political, File No. 74-P of 1924.

So in Bundi it took a different turn. Meetings were held to protest⁴² against several inequitable taxes, specially the war fund in the form as mentioned above. The *kisan* movement here was organized under the leadership of Nainuram Sharma.

42. *Abhyudaya*, dated June 10, is the only source which gives fullest information on the incident besides Government records. It is available at the National Archives of India, New Delhi. Some sketchy references are also available in *Atma Katha* of Motilal Tejawat, *op. cit.*

THE BHILS

The Background

The Bijolia movement was a successful movement, and effective at large. The Bhils of Sirohi, Mewar, Idar, etc., were against the disparity in their taxes, and gathered under the leadership of Moti Lal Tejawat. For a better grasp of the course of events it will be proper to describe the Bhil movement which took place earlier to this.

There are several legends regarding the origin of the Bhils. The most common is that they are the descendants of Mahadeo who had a chance mating with a woman he met in the woods and then kept her as mistress and had many children from her. One of them, ugly and vicious, killed his father's bull and was banished to the hills and jungles. His descendants have since been called Bhils or outcastes. In Dungarpur the Bhils believe they are the descendants of the mythical personage Raja Vena. He is said to have ruled the people with an iron rod and compelled them to worship him. His conduct had so enraged the Rishis that they killed him by the power of *mantras*. On his death the country over which he ruled became greatly disturbed and to restore order the Rishis created from Vena's dead body two sons from the eldest of whom, the Bhils say, they have descended.

The areas chiefly populated by the Bhils in Rajasthan are Udaipur, Banswara, Dungarpur and Sirohi. They worship Hanuman and Mahadeo besides the Kuldevi. In Magra Rikhabdeo, the Jain saint is their chief object of reverence under the name of Kalaji.

Col. Tod undertook the task of suppressing the wild and turbulent tribes of Bhils and Grasiyas inhabiting the hills in the south and south-west parts of Mewar.¹ During the days of

1. *Treaties, Engagements and Sanads*, Vol. III, p. 6.

anarchy these people had done away with the institutions of the State and established their own. They lived on a forced tax 'Rakhwali' on the neighbouring villages and a tax called 'Bolai' on the passage of goods and travellers for whose safety they were considered responsible.² These taxes the Bhils realized by prescriptive rights rather than by legal authority conferred by the Rana and the Rajput chiefs who were called Bhomias and who were in possession of the Bhomat part of the hilly area, and received a share of the *Bolai* tax. These chiefs owed a nominal allegiance to the Maharana of Udaipur and held the right of property in the land over which the Maharana had no power. Col. Tod in order to re-establish the Rana's authority in the hilly district decided to resume the above taxes and compel the tribes to pursue peaceful avocations. The Bhils as well as the Bhomia chiefs refused to yield. Therefore, in 1823, the British troops were employed against them, and they were compelled to surrender.³ But permanent peace could not be established.

The British Government took away the administration from the Maharana and created the post of an Assistant Political Agent.⁴ A Bhil Corps was raised for whom Mewar paid Rs. 50,000 annually. Civil control over the Bhomat area was left with the Maharana in 1841.⁵

As the State authorities were corrupt, greedy and inefficient, in 1868 the Bhils of Korwar Pal in the hilly district of Mewar indulged in lawless activities.⁶ Mehta Raghunath Singh and Moti Singh were corrupt. Maj. Mackeson, the Political Agent, wrote to the Maharana regarding the double levy of taxes and heavy fines on the people. The Maharana sent 200 infantry and 150 cavalry to suppress the Bhils. The State troops resorted to brutal measures against them and restored peace.⁷

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 9.

4. *Ibid*

5. *Ibid.*

6. Maj. Mackeson's letter to Maharana Sambhu Singh, November 20, 1868. (Bakshi Khana, Udaipur.)

7. *Ibid.*

For the first time in 1881 a census was attempted in Mewar. In the prevailing backward and conservative atmosphere of the State it also became the cause of dissatisfaction among the people.⁸ By 1881 several factors combined to bring about a critical situation in the hilly district. The barbarous social practices prevailing among the Bhils were being ruthlessly suppressed by the Durbar under the supervision of the Political Agent. The Mewar Durbar had issued orders prohibiting manufacture of liquor, which the Bhils regarded as their age-old right. The rise in the price of salt and abrogation of the right to manufacture salt and mismanagement in its distribution enhanced their dissatisfaction. Lastly the census operations caused a great uproar among them and only a spark was needed to light the fire of a general uprising.⁹

The *Thanedar* of Baropal, 14 miles south of Udaipur, in March, 1881, sent a mounted policeman to summon a *gameti* of another *pal*, Paduna, 9 miles away, to appear as witness in a land dispute.¹⁰ The *gameti* concerned refused to comply. When the policeman tried to use force, it resulted in his murder by the Bhils standing by. This incident alarmed the whole Bhil population of this area who feared reprisals and took an oath to fight as one if there was an armed attack by the State troops. The emissaries of the Bhils of Baropal and Paduna scattered in all parts of the area and instigated the whole population to join in their defiance.¹¹ The *Thanedar* of Baropal was killed along with the *Kalal* (liquor contractor), several other persons and the police posts were burnt down.¹² Bhils of Ashirgarh, Kotra, Payee and other places also joined them. At Asirgarh a *Kamdar* and few policemen were done to death. The Bhils burnt the police post of Kewra pass. Akshya Singh, the *Hakim* of the hilly tract, was besieged in the village of Parsad. The Chief leaders of the upsurge were Neema Gameti of Bulok Pal, Khema of People and Joyota of

8. *Mewar Agency Reports*, 1880-81, D.L. Paliwal Mewar and the British, p. 8.

9. *Foreign Political*, April, 1881, No. 25-39.

10. *Mewar Agency Records*.

11. *Ibid*.

12. *Ibid*.

Sagatari. The road between Udaipur and Kherwara was closed by them.

The news of the widespread disturbances reached Udaipur on March 26, 1881. The next day a force of Durbar troops consisting of two guns, 150 cavalry and 500 infantry left Udaipur with orders to open the roads and suppress disorder at the insurgent *pals* avoiding a clash with the peaceful Bhils.¹³ Troops were placed under the command of Lonargan and Raja Aman Singh. When they reached Baropal and Paduna, they found the *pals* deserted. The troops burnt a few roadside huts of those *pals* to terrify the Bhils. As the troops proceeded further, the Bhils cried '*faire*', '*faire*', shot arrows and disappeared in the hills. News was then received that the Bhils intended sacking the villages of Parsad and Rikhabdeo and were threatening to attack the post of Kherwara itself.¹⁴ Consequently, the troops were divided. Rawat Pratap Singh of Bhainsrorgarh, Maharaj Raj Singh of Shivpura and Maulvi Abdur Rahman Khan were sent towards Kotra while Rawal Ratan Singh of Kurabar, Mehta Takht Singh and Madan Singh of Balhara proceeded towards the Kewara Pass.¹⁵

In the meanwhile, Shyamaldas, the Maharana's Personal Secretary, accompanying the troops, received a letter from the Maharana on March 29, 1881, in which the Maharana had expressed his dissatisfaction at the slow movement of Mewar troops and directed them to save Akshya Singh at Parsad. The remaining troops, thereupon, advanced towards the villages of Godara on March 30, fighting their way and killing several Bhils whose dead bodies the Bhils carried away.¹⁶ However, the troops were insufficient in number and the Bhils continued to block their advance and interrupt the communications.¹⁷ There were no reinforcements coming from Udaipur. On their

13. *Vir Vinod*, pp. 2220-22.

Foreign Political, April, 1881, 25-39.

14. *Mewar Agency Report*, April, 1880-81.

15. *Vir Vinod*, p. 2220.

16. *Vir Vinod*, p. 2221.

17. *Mewar Agency Report*, April, 1880-81.

arrival at Rikhabdeo, the Mewar troops found from 6,000 to 7,000 Bhils assembled there. The latter attacked the State troops, but were repulsed. For three days the Bhils were chased and fired at by guns and muskets but to no consequence. Following their usual practice the Bhils disappeared in the fastness while being attacked and then reappeared suddenly and attacked the unwary enemy.¹⁸

Having realized that the Bhils could not be suppressed in that way, Shyamaldas entered into negotiations with the Bhil leaders through Khemraj Bhandari, the priest of the Rikhabdeo temple. The Bhils put forth some 24 demands. They asked the Government to cease interference with their practices and usages, such as witch-hunting, stop Census work, withdraw Barar tax (war tax) and pull back the State troops.¹⁹ As the negotiations commenced the Bhils agreed to open the roads, on condition that the movement of the State troops would be withheld, so as to enable the State officers to send their demands to the Maharana for consideration. Both parties agreed to suspend their hostilities until April 17, during which period negotiations would continue in order to arrive at an amicable settlement.²⁰ On receiving the reports of the disturbances in the hilly area of Mewar the Governor-General expressed resentment at the conduct of the British Officers in Mewar Agency who were not carefully looking after their business. He observed that it was perfectly well known in Rajputana that if Durbar officials were not guided and controlled by our Political Officers in their dealings with the Bhils, they would mismanage and bring in trouble.²¹ The Agent to the Governor-General arrived at Udaipur under the Government of India instructions and took the affairs in his own hands.

Negotiations at Rikhabdeo continued on April 19. Lt. Col. Blair, the first Assistant Political Agent in Mewar and Commandant of the Mewar Bhil Corps, arrived on the scene from

18. *Vir Vinod*, pp. 2221-2222.

19. *Vir Vinod*, p. 2226.

20. *Mewar Agency Report*, 1880-81.

21. *Foreign Political*, April, 1881, No. 25, 39.

Udaipur accompanied by the Mewar Settlement Officer, Wingate.²² Blair tried to contact the Bhil leaders directly through his trustworthy Bhil officers. Apprehension arose in the minds of the Durbar officers lest the British Government should make a direct settlement with the Bhils, and the hilly area of Mewar might be taken away from Mewar, as was done with the Mewar part of the Merwara during the time of Maharana Bhim Singh.²³ Regardless of the objections of Mewar officials, Blair entered into talks with the Bhil leaders and asked the Mewar officials to remit the taxes and stop the Census for the time being. On the same day some disorder took place at the conference between the State officials and the Bhil representatives. Fearing that disturbances might again break out, Blair telegraphically summoned British troops from Erinpura with the intimation that a serious rising was imminent on account of the deceitful tactics of the Mewar officials in dealing with the Bhils. At Udaipur, Col. Walter, on receiving the news of the failure of talks of Udaipur officials with the Bhils, persuaded the Maharana to permit Blair to supercede Shyamaldas if necessary, to bring about a settlement with the Bhils.²⁴ This instantly broke down the morale of the State officials, who immediately came to an agreement with the Bhils.²⁵

The Mewar Government agreed to remit half the *Barar* and stop Census work while the Bhils agreed to pay a fine to compensate for the killing of the State personnel and promised to refrain from lawlessness in the future, to abide by the State laws and not to help the offenders. An inscription was raised at Rikhabdeo announcing the settlement. The settlement was cheerful news for the Governor-General who observed that Col. Walter had done well in keeping the Durbar in front and himself acting as mediator, thereby saving the British Government the trouble of coming into direct collision and exacerbation with the Bhils.²⁶

22. *Ibid.*, No. 137-139.

23. *Vir Vinod*, p. 2226.

24. Foreign Political, April, No. 1881, No. 137-139.

25. *Vir Vinod*, p. 2227.

26. Foreign Political, April, 1881, No. 137-39.

The above settlement, however, did not at once bring total peace in the hilly district. Disturbances here and there continued for some time. In the beginning of 1882 the Bhils of Bhorai and Kathra *pals* took to lawlessness. They besieged the house of Dayalal Chobisa, the *girdawar* of the district. Troops were again sent from Udaipur which suppressed the insurgence and punished its leaders.²⁷ The Maharana got a fort constructed at Bhorai and put a garrison of 300 troops in the fort to keep a constant restraint on the nearby *pals*²⁸. Lord Ripon was gratified to learn about the way the Maharana had punished the outrageous Bhils and observed that he had 'acted in those difficulties with energy, judgment and mercially supported and advised by Dr. Stratton, the Officiating Political Agent'.²⁹

Col. Walter toured the hilly district in the winter of 1882-83 in order to bring about a permanent pacification in the district. He had the necessary consultations with the Maharana before proceeding on tour. The latter, desirous of permanent peace in the area, agreed to allow him to act and decide on his behalf as he thought fit on the spot.³⁰

At Rikhabdeo Col. Walter had a successful meeting with several of the *gametis* and a large number of Bhils. An agreement was arrived at. The Agent to the Governor-General subsequently reported: 'The Bhils put their turban on my feet begging pardon. My main object in assembling the Bhils was to tell them that the crime of witch-swinging must be put down. After several hours of discussion an agreement was arrived at, which was engraved on a stone, put on the right-hand side of the entrance of the temple with much ceremony.' The agreement provided that {the *gametis* (headmen of the *pals*) and the *Banjgavis* (headmen of the hamlets) would never allow a woman to be killed on the suspicion of her being a witch. If they had a suspicion on any woman, they would report it to the Government. They took the oath

27. *Ibid*, June, 1882, No. 83-92.

28. *Mewar Agency Report*, 1882-83, by Col. Walter.

29. *Foreign Political*, June, 1882, No. 82-83.

30. *Mewar Residency Report*, 1882-83.

of 'Kalaji' (their deity at Rikhabdeo) that they would follow the agreement.³¹

There was a great famine during 1899-1901. In Udaipur people ate tree leaves and the affairs were badly managed. Collection of revenue fell into arrears and agrarian conditions in the State began to deteriorate. Hilly areas inhabited by the Bhils were much affected.

In Marwar it was worse. People still remember:

*'Chhapanianre sall pher mut ajo meri Marwar men,
Bajrari roti guwarre phari chhapan ke mund pe beejri pari.'*

'The wild tribes of Bhils and Minas getting desperate to save their lives indulged everywhere in loot and plunder.'³²

The upsurge of the Indian people during the first decade of the 20th century in the form of Swadeshi Movement had its echo heard in the hilly tracts of Mewar, Malwa, and Gujarat inhabited mostly by the Bhils. In 1905, an organization called 'Samp Sabha' was formed under the leadership of Swami Govind. This organization worked for the boycotting of foreign goods, for the growth of national industries, for administrative reforms in the area and for the revival of the Panchayat system in these villages. The movement was crushed by 1908 by the States of Mewar, Sirohi and Dungarpur.³³ The failure of the 'Samp Sabha' was attributed to its few members being from *Rajgharanas* and high officials of the State.³⁴

Bhil Movement Under Motilal Tejawat

In 1921-22, the Bhils of Mewar, Dungarpur, Idar, Sirohi and Danta revolted against the disparity of the taxes.³⁵ They demanded that different standards of taxation should be

31. *Ibid.*

32. Foreign Political Internal, March, 1900, No. 190-208. For famine and relief, see Walkfield, G.E.C., *Fifty Years in Service of India*.

33. Raghubir Singh, *Purva Adhunik Rajasthan*, p. 320.

34. Bora, Ramchandra, *Amar Saheed Sagarmal Gopal*, p. 13.

35. Foreign Political, 276-P of 1929.

replaced by a uniform system throughout the tract inhabited by them. Motilal Tejawat persuaded the Bhils to be organized and rise in rebellion against the disparity.³⁶ Consequently, all the Bhils of Mewar, Sirohi, Dungarpur, Idar and Danta joined the organization of Bhil *kisans* under his leadership.³⁷ The authorities of the different States as well as the British Government were alarmed and took the agitation as a challenge to the *status quo*, peace and tranquillity. The Idar Durbar issued a proclamation banning 'gathering of Bhils and entry of Motilal Tejawat' and declaring shelter or protection to him an offence.³⁸

In Sirohi the agitation of the Bhils took a different turn and ultimately it was thought proper to invite Vijai Singh Pathik to pacify the Bhils.³⁹ As a result the Bhils agreed to hold a conference on a particular date, which was to be fixed, and to co-operate with the State. But instead of allowing the holding of the conference the State followed a policy of repression and this excited the Bhils. The movement became so widely known that Mahatma Gandhi sent Manilal Kothari to Sirohi. He successfully persuaded Motilal Tejawat, the Bhil leader, and Holland, Agent to the Governor-General, for negotiations. But the Rajputana Agency instead of keeping in mind the negotiations took to repressive measures. On May 8, 1922, Bhula and Balodiya villages were set on fire and in Rohera tahsil police opened fire on peaceful Bhils,⁴⁰ and persecution of Vijai Singh Pathik and others was proposed.⁴¹ The information of these atrocities reached⁴² the Rajasthan Seva Sangh, Ajmer, on May 9, 1922, and *Tarun Rajasthan* published it the next day.⁴³

36. *Ibid.*

37. The Bhils looked at Motilal Tejawat as their Messiah, who had come for their eternal deliverance.

38. Foreign Political, 276-P of 1929; *Abhyudaya*, dated April 15, 1922.

39. Kela, Bhagwandas, *Deshi Rajyon ki Jan Jagriti*, pp. 72-73; Ramakant Malviya's telegram to Mahatma Gandhi, appreciating Pathik's efforts.

40. *Ibid.*

41. Foreign Political, 954-1, (Sec.) 1922-23, 428 P (Sec.) 1922-23.

42. *Tarun Rajasthan*, dated May 10, 1922.

43. *Ibid.*

The Rajasthan Seva Sangh deputed Satya Bhakt and Ram Narain Chowdhry to make an on-the-spot inquiry. They reached the spot on May 15, 1922, and recorded the statements of a number of *panchas* and peaceful citizens.⁴⁴ The *panchas* explained the situation and made a pathetic narration of the cruelties to which they were subjected. The Seva Sangh's representatives further examined about 115 witnesses who corroborated the statements of the *panchas*. Besides, about 138 Bhils also recorded their statements separately. According to the Rajasthan Seva Sangh records, about 1,800 men and women were killed, 640 houses were either burnt or razed to the ground, 7,085 maunds of grain was destroyed, 600 carts were burnt, 108 cattle were either killed or taken away and some other articles worth rupees ten thousand were destroyed.⁴⁵ This Bhil tragedy awakened and excited the people about their civil liberties and the right to live peacefully.⁴⁶

In spite of all this and the State repressive policy the movement gained momentum. Motilal Tejawat dressed himself like the Bhils. A *Bhil Kisan Sammelan* was organized at Berisal in Udaipur under his chairmanship. This *sammelan* prepared a big memorandum and presented it to the Maharana after naming it as '*Mewar Pukar*', but all in vain.⁴⁷

In the beginning of 1923, Motilal Tejawat again organized a new *Aiki* movement among the Bhils of Poshima and Sirohi.⁴⁸ He directed the agitation from Chhochor near Dilwara. He somehow came in contact with the Idar Praja Mandal at Bombay. The *Mukhias* of Poshima Patt approached them at the instance of Motilal Tejawat.⁴⁹ The Idar Praja-mandal enlisted a large number of Bhils as members and demanded Motilal Tejawat's services in the movement.⁵⁰ This provoked the State authorities and the British Government officials. Manikant, the Political Agent, the Mewar

44. Chowdhary, *Vartman Rajasthan*; Kela, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

45. *Proceedings of Rajasthan Seva Sangh; Abhyudaya*, different issues.

46. Foreign Political May 10, 1929. Letter No. 821.

47. *Motilal Tejawat ki Atma Katha*, MSS.

48. Foreign Political, 276-P of 1929.

49. *Ibid.*

50. *Ibid.*

Maharana and the Bombay Police were, therefore, very keen to arrest him. However, on June 4, 1929, Tejawat was arrested by a *hawaldar* of Idar State when he came to a village near Khed Brahma (Idar) in the Brahmaji temple where he had come to attend a conference of the Bhils.⁵¹ He was then handed over to the State of Mewar in July, 1929.⁵² The Mewar Government kept Tejawat in jail for seven years without framing any charge against him and without any trial.⁵³ However, in 1936, after intervention of Manilal Kothari on behalf of Mahatma Gandhi Motilal Tejawat was released but on condition that he would give an undertaking that he would not leave the Mewar territory.⁵⁴

Motilal Tejawat now expressed his willingness to take up Khadi production and make it popular among the peasants. He demanded about Rs. 5000 for this project. But the State authorities did not like it. They instead proposed that he should work among the Sansis and Kanjars and prepare them to give up bad habits and become good citizens. Tejawat, however, remained⁵⁵ indecisive on this issue.

In 1942 the Quit India Movement started. Motilal Tejawat expressed his desire to go to the Bhils and work there but he was arrested on the charge that he was not allowed to cross the Municipal limits of the town.⁵⁶ He was, however, released in 1947.⁵⁷

Motilal Tejawat's *Atma Katha*⁵⁸ is an important source material for the incident. *Abhyudaya*,⁵⁹ a contemporary weekly

51. Letter No. 821 of 1923-29, National Archives of India.
52. *Rajasthan*, dated May 10, 1935.
53. *Ibid.*; *Motilal Tejawat ki Atma Katha*.
54. *Rajasthan*, dated May 4, 1936.
55. *Motilal Tejawat ki Atma Katha*.
56. *Navjeevan*, dated November 6, 1944.
57. *Ibid.*, February 3, 1947.
58. Motilal Tejawat wrote his memoirs in his *Atma Katha*. MSS is available at Hindi Sahitya Mandir, Jodhpur.
59. *Abhyudaya*, dated April 4, 1922; April 22, 1922; June 3, 1922, are important and are available at the National Archives of India, New Delhi. *Abhyudaya*'s issues of July 15, 1922, and July 22, 1922, have also published the answer of the Sirohi ruler clarifying about Bhil subjection in Sirohi.

published from Prayag, is also a very good source material regarding the Bhil movement of Amet and Sirohi. *Navjeevan* published from Udaipur is another source which deals with the later phase of Tejawat's activities and is available at Navjeevan office, Udaipur.

Vanvasi Seva Sangh

The Vanvasi Seva Sangh was an organization⁶⁰ to awaken the Bhils socially and politically and had been quite successful in attaining its object, so much so that a number of Bhils had taken pledge not to drink liquor and abstain from opium eating.⁶¹

In 1940, the Vanvasi Seva Sangh, Dungarpur, organized an exhibition⁶² through which the Bhil boys and girls presented a number of *Jhankis* throwing light on the social and economic progress of the Bhil tract.

In 1945, Bhure Lal Baya and Bhogilal Pandya appealed to the people to help the Vanvasi Seva Sangh.⁶³ Gauri Shankar Upadhyaya and, at his instance, Harideo Joshi⁶⁴ joined the Sangh. The Sangh planned to open schools to make the Bhils literate. And gradually the Bhils became so awakened that they started demanding a responsible democratic government. The work of Senga Bhai and the laying down of life by Kalibai, a little Bhil girl, and her brother Nana Bhai are still remembered with respect.⁶⁵

Navjeevan published from Udaipur is the main important source regarding the Vanvasi Seva Sangh, besides the Government records. The individual record of Bhogilal Pandya and

60. Members of the Vanvasi Seva Sangh executive were : Rajkumar Man Singh, Bhure Lal Baya, Bhogilal Pandya, etc.

61. Kela, *op. cit.*, pp. 382-83.

62. *Navjeevan*, dated June 6, 1940.

63. *Ibid.*, August 20, 1945.

64. The Present Chief Minister of Rajasthan.

65. Kalibai and Nana Bhai gave their lives during the reign of Maharawal Laxman Singh, leader of the Opposition in the Rajasthan Legislative Assembly.

Bhure Lal Baya may be taken into account as an important source.

Dungarpur Movement

In 1939, the Dungarpur Government passed the Rok and Intjam Begar Act, under which the State of Dungarpur was entitled to take 'begar' from all castes including Brahmins, Rajputs and Vaishyas. This begar was utilized for the purposes of State and, later on, also for the State's commercial activities. This gave birth to bribery and thus feudalism marched hand in hand with capitalism. On top of the above acts, women, men, etc., were mortgaged against money and the same was registered with the State. It was a queer system and a unique example of the times.

Against all these iniquities the Praja Mandal was starting a movement and therefore it was shifting the centre of politics to the villages to enlist mass support. The leaders who initiated this movement were Bhogilal Pandya,⁶⁶ Gauri Shankar Upadhyaya, etc.

In April, 1946, Bhogilal Pandya along with his 28 *satyagrahi* associates was arrested under Section 124, Indian Penal Code, and kept in jail for 27 days. In Dungarpur, Section 144 (3) was enforced, which led to a mass revolt and uprising.

The State passed orders exiling Harideo Joshi and Gauri Shankar Upadhyaya. In jail Pandya was beaten up severely. In protest he went on a hunger-strike for the recognition of his status and that of his comrades as political prisoners. This was again supported by an agitation by the public and the State was forced to withdraw its orders imposing Section 144 (3), Indian Penal Code, and ordering the putting into jail of the *satyagrahis* and the exile of Harideo Joshi and others.

On June 1, 1947, in Runawala, the village school was razed by State officials, the school-teacher, Shivram, abducted and taken to Dungarpur forests and all the residents of the school house including women were mercilessly beaten up.

66. Bhogilal Pandya is at present Chairman, Rajasthan Khadi Gramodyog Board, Jaipur.

From village of Shivram 300 Bhils reached Runawala. Bhogilal Pandya also reached there on foot with his associates. There they found that the customs terminal had been set on fire by the State police. The Bhils while trying to extinguish the fire found that the cash, etc., had already been stolen by the State officials.

Pandya exhorted the Bhils to return to their village but they refused and insisted that they would fight to the end and secure their teacher, Shivram, dead or alive. Bhogilal Pandya then took 40 to 45 Bhils with him and marched towards Jhutha. As soon as they reached there a State police force opened fire on them. In all four shots were fired but none was hurt. At this moment Pandya took off his clothes and challenged the police to kill him. The police force was left as *kanees*, and they accepted the return of Shivram to his village.

After the settlement when Pandya and his companions were about to take their food, etc., the Jagirdars arrived at the spot with police reinforcements.

They beat up everybody in the village and transported them (Bhogilal Pandya was in an unconscious state) to the Dhambola police station in a truck. At the police station they were informed that they might be poisoned so they did not take the food given to them and made their own secret arrangements for food. Similarly water given to them was found to be mixed with urine so they rejected this also and demanded clean drinking water.

They were produced before a Magistrate the next day for evidence, and in his presence beaten up. The Magistrate asked them to give evidence and ordered that they could say what they liked. Bhogilal Pandya represented that they should not be beaten and the Magistrate replied that those who rebelled against the Maharaja should be treated like that only.

Then charges of rape, burning of the Customs post, drinking, etc., were levelled against Pandya and others.

On the same day Pandya was beaten with rifle butts, etc., and fell unconscious. To the village of Rastopal where all this was taking place, the Superintendent of Police, etc., went and they beat up the school-teacher and Nanabhai Khant. Both

were taken along with others to the school. On the way Nana-bhai died of a rifle-butt hit. The school-teacher was tied to the car seeing which a Bhil girl, Kali Bai, about 12 years of age, stepped ahead and cut the rope. At this rifles shots were fired which hit her at various places. She succumbed to her injuries on her way to Dungarpur.

The Bhils hearing of the firing collected their weapons and in large numbers gathered together at Dungarpur. Pandya's case could not continue, and he was taken to Dungarpur via Gujarat. Ultimately the cases against the leaders were withdrawn and Section 144 was rescinded.

Banswara Movement

In Banswara the Praja Mandal under the leadership of Bhoopendra Nath Trivedi prepared the villagers not to perform *begar* and give bribe. As a result the goods transported through *begar* remained uncleared for months together and there was a standstill in the administration, thus the law and order situation in the State was paralyzed. Police compelled a *kisan* of Kelamela village for *begar* which was not only refused by him but the whole village rose in revolt against this. Anticipating some unavoidable and unwanted incident, police left the village. But the villagers suspected some game in this police reaction so they closed all the paths leading to Kelamela village. Trees were cut down and used as roadblocks and people from surrounding villages assembled with their bows and arrows and other arms. Dola Bhagat, on behalf of the villagers, reached Banswara and conveyed in detail all the incidents to Bhoopendra Nath Trivedi.

This greatly alarmed the *Thikanedars* and State authorities. Police and State authorities under the command of Thakur Madan Singh of Garnavat *Thikana* and State Revenue Minister Ghanshyam Gupta took position at village Mungra, about four or five miles from Kelamela village and on the other side of river Mahi. State forces tried to cross the river but the Bhils obstructed their way by attacking them. Trivedi reached the spot after walking 20 miles on foot, and after discussing the situation with his Bhil followers wrote to Ghanshyam Gupta that he and the police party should not cross the river

and the matter may be settled by peaceful negotiations. Accordingly, Madan Singh and Basir Mohammad Ranger were sent for negotiations. The Bhils suspecting some treachery on their part allowed them to cross the river only after making themselves naked.

At the negotiations it was admitted that police was at fault. Further, it was agreed that five representatives of the Adivasis could meet Chief Minister Mohan Singh Mehta and that no action would be taken against them. Thus the police force was withdrawn and Mohan Singh Mehta solved the problem through peaceful means.

After a few days another incident occurred, between the residents of village Dery and some Forest officials. It so happened that a patrol party of the Forest Department reached Dery and was resting near the village well. Few women came to draw water from the well. One of the Forest officials teased one of them. The women lost their temper and beat up the Forest officials very badly with sticks. After this the officials ran away.

The Forest officials, to take revenge, lodged a complaint with police at Banswara. A police party went to Dery village to arrest the villagers who apprehending danger had already deserted the village. Police could not find even a single human being in whole of the village. Bhoopendra Nath Trivedi met Chief Minister Mohan Singh Mehta and the police party was withdrawn. The villagers came back to the village. All the police cases were also withdrawn.

After Independence the Praja Mandal started a no-tax movement. But just when it was gaining momentum the Bhoopendra Nath Trivedi Government took oath of office. The new Government soon issued orders for linking the villages with Banswara by road. Each *kisan* was allowed to construct a house on agricultural land and the forest laws were relaxed with a view to benefiting the *kisans*. A new department was established for the development of agriculture.

The conditions of villagers are well depicted in *Sangram*,⁶⁷ a periodical edited and published by Bhoopendra Nath Trivedi, and a few pamphlets and booklets⁶⁸ were issued by the Praja Mandal regarding *begar*, etc. The main sources are the *memoirs* of leaders like Bhoopendra Nath Trivedi, etc. ; some references may also be seen in the Private Papers of Hira Lal Shastri.

In Sumnesh Joshi's book⁶⁹ it has been referred that after the formation of the Rajasthan Union Manik Lal Verma became its Chief Minister. It is mentioned that he had sent a report to the Union Government about the anticipated revolution of the Bhils. On this basis between 300 and 400 Central Reserve Police men were posted in the Dhandhal area of Banswara for about two and a half months. Manik Lal Verma also reinstated the officials who had been dismissed by the Trivedi Government to take revenge from the public. However, this was seized after a year when Manik Lal Verma was ousted from power.

Kushalgarh Movement

In the chiefship of Kushalgarh a Gandhi Ashram was established by Dadam Chand Doshi and Panna Lal Trivedi. The aim of the Ashram was to educate the Bhils and prepare them to adjust to the new environment. This information is provided by the *memoris* of Panna Lal Trivedi and are available at *Shodhak*, Jaipur.

67. Few files of *Sangram* available with *Shodhak*, Jaipur.

68. Few booklets and pamphlets are available with the publisher.

69. Joshi, Sumnesh : *Rajasthan men Swatantra Sangram ke Senani*, p. 361.

ALWAR AND BHARATPUR

Alwar—*Neemuchana Leads*

The British Government of India had imposed heavy import duties on the costly articles exported from Europe to this country which were purchased by the princes and the wealthier classes. This was a drain on the economy of the States whose princes and rulers indulged in such extravagance. This necessitated an increase in the land revenue and other taxes in the native States which was done under the cover of new revenue settlements in almost every State. The result of these enhanced taxes was that troubles broke out in 1925 in various States. The most tragic was the agitation in *Neemuchana*, a *Thikana* in the former State of Alwar. Quite a few small Jagirdars felt hard hit by the enhanced rates of revenue, but it was only the *Thakur* of *Neemuchana* who openly defied the decision of the Government.¹ *Neemuchana* was a *Thikana* in Alwar State having *biswedari* rights. The holder was a Shekhawat Rajput.

In the former State of Alwar, according to information provided by a pamphlet published by the Indian States People's Conference from Bombay around 1930, the then Maharaja decided to increase the tax on agricultural land in 1925 'to remove the difficulties of the farmers' under what he called the '1925 settlement'.² He increased the land tax by no less than 50 per cent and imposed a variety of other taxes. Even the Rajput peasants, who could have been loyal to the Maharaja, at least on grounds of caste, revolted against his Government. But it was not an armed revolt. They presented a representation to the Maharaja, and even a few small Jagir-

1. *Princely India*, dated August 16, 1926; *Tarun Rajasthan*, dated October 5, 1926; *The Times of India*, dated 16, 1926; Chowdhry, P. S., *op. cit.*, p. 213.
2. Eshwar, L. M., p. 10.

dars were in close co-operation with the peasants³. But when their representation bore no fruit, they (the *kisans*) approached the Paramount Power (the British Agent of the Governor-General of India in the region) under the leadership of the Thakur of Neemuchana.⁴

The Maharaja was greatly annoyed over this and expressed his displeasure in such a way that the *kisans* came to know about this. Despite the Maharaja's attitude and also evidently because the burden was too heavy to bear the normally docile peasants decided to assemble on May 14, 1925, at village Neemuchana to chalk out their future programme of action against poverty and injustice. Even as they were deciding to wait upon the Maharaja and seek justice, a posse of police and infantry men numbering some 400, equipped with machine-guns and small arms, descended on the village.⁵

The armed forces were led by no less a person than the Inspector-General of Police of the State, for, a meeting of the nature described above, was considered highly dangerous to the Maharaja himself and his regime. The Inspector-General asked the peasants assembled there to repent their action of approaching the Paramount Power. The *kisans* were adamant, not realizing probably that in a few minutes they would no longer be in this world to complain of excessive tax burdens.

According to the instructions received from the authorities the armed forces opened fire and for full two hours were at the guns. The forces also entered the houses and spared none, not even children and women, and finally the entire village was set on fire. Even today if one goes to Neemuchana he can see the evidence of the 1925 orgy in the form of dilapidated dwellings and the tale-tell ruins.

An enquiry committee has recorded that 156 lives were lost on the spot and over 600 seriously wounded, many of

3. *Princely India*, dated August 16, 1926.

4. *Princely India*, dated August 16, 1926; *Tarun Rajasthan*, dated October 5, 1926; Ram Pande, p. 5.

5. Eshwar, L. M., p. 11.

6. Eshwar, p. 11, gives the number of the dead as 97.

whom later succumbed to their injuries. Several of the wounded were taken as prisoners to Alwar where they were sentenced to 20 years' hard labour. But hardly any of them lived to serve the sentence for more than a year. Many of the injured lay bleeding for days together near the temple where the meeting took place. Neighbouring villagers and some national leaders brought this to the notice of the Agent to the Governor-General. He only smiled in reply. The neighbouring villagers had also exposed themselves to danger,⁷ and the *biswedari* of the Neemuchana *Thakur* was confiscated.

The information is supplied by two contemporary newspapers—*Princely India* and *Tarun Rajasthan*—files of which are available at Saraswati Library, Fatehpur (Shekhawati). *The Times of India* is another source of information for the incident. A pamphlet published by the People's Conference is also useful. The Government records on the subject are : Fortnightly reports and the Foreign and Political Proceedings available at the National Archives of India, New Delhi.

Another important *kisan* movement was the revolt of the Meos in 1931. The Meos who are now classified as members of the Scheduled Castes formed a sizable part of the territory in the former State of Alwar. Their area is still known as Mewat.⁸ Some of the Meos are Hindu and all the Meos practise Hindu customs. A surveyor observes, 'a large number of the Meos still revere Hindu gods and goddesses side by

7. *Ibid.*

8. Mewat constitutes 13% of Alwar, 8% of Bharatpur and the rest of Hariyana. (*Imperial Gazetteer of India*, XVII, 313). The remark of Dwyer about their character is worth quoting : 'While the men are lazy, the women are energetic and industrious and do most of the field work except the ploughing. They are impulsive, shortsighted, easily led, especially in wrong direction, litigious, not hospitable to Muslims, but ruinously extravagant on certain occasions such as weddings and funerals. They lack the stamina of the Jats, prosperity turns Meo's head, adversity makes him lose it, and as they themselves freely admit they are only good while kept well under control. Their faculties are, however, sharper than of any other tribe except perhaps the Ahirs, and this keeps them keen defenders of their own interests and quick to observe and resent any injustice.' *Alwar Settlement Report*, p. 22.

side believing in the one God as enjoined by Islam.⁹ The Minas and the Meos are said to be concluding inter-marriages till the time of Mughal Emperor Akbar.¹⁰ They probably embraced Islam during the invasions of Muhammad Ghazni.¹¹ The Meos still are mostly illiterate but are a very fine people. They are sturdy and strong and are good agriculturists like the Jats.¹²

We learn from the Political Department records that 'excessive taxation (was) levied on the cultivators, who at a time of acute agricultural depression were being molested by way of land revenue, customs and octroi between 40 and 50 per cent more than the admittedly high assessment fixed by Michael O'Dwyer when he conducted the Settlement of Alwar'.¹³

A sizable population of the Meos of Alwar had revolted against high taxation under the leadership of Yashin Khan, and the neighbouring border State of Bharatpur sought British help in quelling the revolt lest it should spread to those areas and take the form of a movement for liberation from imperialism and feudalism.¹⁴

Arthur, an officer of the British Political Department,¹⁵ himself admits that the root cause of the trouble was the Maharaja's personal extravagance. According to him, the Maharaja took a leading place amongst the princes by reason of his impressive personality but being the ruler of a comparatively small State (it measured 3,141 sq. miles and is now a small district of Rajasthan) he could not hope to compete financially with the rulers of the larger States like Bikaner or Gwalior, Kashmir or Patiala, whom he considered as his main rivals in the British imperialists' court.¹⁶

9. Hashim Amin Ali, *Meos of Mewat*, p. 64.

Jat kya Hindu aur Meo kya Mussalman (A Meo is a Meo irrespective of his religion, caste, language, area; so is a Jat.)

10. *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, XVII, 313.

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*

13. Foreign Political Proceedings, 1932, File No. not given.

14. *Ibid.*

15. Quoted in Eshwar, p. 12.

16. Eshwar, p. 12.

But his arrogance was such, that he could not endure being classed in any way by his rivals and, consequently, he could never keep his head above water. He always exacted money from poor peasants.¹⁷ The Maharaja of Alwar collected an average revenue of Rs. 60 lakhs between 1920 and 1930. However, the uprising was crushed through the British help.

The original source of information for the Meo uprising are the Government records available at the National Archives of India and the author has not come across any public or private material. Perhaps it has not been mentioned by any contemporary newspaper.

In 1946 the people of the State of Alwar organized a movement against the jagirdari system of the State. Master Bhola Nath organized a protest meeting in village Kheda Mangal Singh where oppressive measures were introduced. The State authorities arrested Master Bhola Nath and other workers and put them behind the bars. This was resented by the public and ultimately the State authorities freed all the workers including their leader, Master Bhola Nath. This information is well described in the *Alwar Patrika* edited and published by Kunj Bihari Lal Modi, and is available at its office at Jaipur.

Bharatpur—Excess Revenue, Begar Opposed

There were no intermediaries in Bharatpur. The position of the *kisans* was comparatively secure than in other princely States but the State was not free from *kisan* movements.

As early as 1924 Bharatpur had witnessed a general discontent amongst the peasants of the State due to the land revenue policy of the State.¹⁸ The rates of revenue were later further raised under the pretext of land reforms vide Settlement of 1925.

In 1930-31 some youths of Bharatpur came together and formed a group under the leadership of Kishan Lal Joshi,¹⁹

17. *Ibid.*

18. Foreign Political, 1924, File No. 134 (2) Pub.

19. Joshi, Sumnesh, *Rajasthan men Swatantra Sangram ke Senani*, p. 795.

who was a resident of village Khara Brahman in Bharatpur State. The Revenue Member of the State Council raised the rates of taxes and land revenue under the pretext of a new settlement. The youth party appealed to the *kisans* in a pamphlet to refuse to pay the excess land revenue. Kishan Lal Joshi after distributing the pamphlets left for Ajmer. His father, Kaluram, who was a *Patwari* in the State Service, was dismissed as a few pamphlets were recovered from his pocket.²⁰

The desired effect of the appeal was noticeable at Bhusawar, where Bhoji Bagri of Randhirgarh²¹ not only refused to pay the land revenue but pulled out the Maharaja from his car. He was arrested but was afterwards released. The sources of this information are mainly the Government records, e.g., Settlement Reports, Fortnightly Reports, Home, Foreign and Political Proceedings which are available at the National Archives of India, New Delhi, while the pamphlet of 1930-31 entitled '*Kisano se Appeal*' was made available to me by a veteran Congress leader and is available at the office of Shodhak.

The next movement was that of the Kisan Sabha, first founded in Bharatpur in 1940 by Master Fakir Chand Thakur Deshraj who was the leader of the Jat Sabha united the two when he assumed the command of the Kisan Sabha in 1944. Kishan Lal Joshi and Jagannath Kakar started a newspaper, *Kisan*, which strongly supported the *kisan* movement of Dudhwa Khara in Bikaner State.

The *Kisan* is a valuable source for Dudhwa Khara's movement and its copies are available with Kishan Lal Joshi's family. Few copies may also be available with Jagannath Kakar at Bharatpur.

Begar was rampant in Bharatpur State. If any V.I.P. wanted to go duck-shooting, just to please himself, people of

20. *Ibid.*, 818.

21. Randhirgarh is about two miles south-west of Bhusawar. Bhoji's son Brijbasi is a social worker and *kisan*. The author personally contacted him for any type of material regarding the incident he might possess. The reply was in the negative.

the State were required to do *begar* for the sake of his pleasure and if anything was needed by the Raja or any member of his family or by an officer (who were merely among Raja's relations) the villagers were to give it as *begar*. So in 1945-46, *kisans* decided not to perform *begar*.

Every year *melas* (fairs) were held in the 12 Panchayats and all the material for them was transported by carts belonging to the *kisans*. They were forced to do it. As it had been decided not to do *begar* the residents' of Maharajsar village refused to perform it.²²

In 1947 the Lal Jhanda Kisan Sabha, Muslim Conference and Praja Parishad jointly decided to start a movement against *begar*. Wavel and Bikaner Maharaja reached Bharatpur in the first week of January, 1947, for duck shooting.²³ The Praja Parishad under the leadership of Master Adityendra²⁴ staged a demonstration and slogans like 'Wavel go back', 'Bikaner Maharaja go back', '*Begar nahin denge*' were raised at the railway station. Black flags were also shown by Thakur Pooran Singh and Sanwal Prasad Chaturvedi. Later, the Maharaja retaliated, and, at the gates of the fort, Raj Bahadur,²⁵ Mukat Behari, Sanwal Prasad Chaturvedi, etc., were badly injured.²⁶

However, the Lal Jhanda Kisan Sabha, Muslim Conference and Praja Parishad decided to continue the movement and despite all the efforts of the Bharatpur Government it gained momentum. February 5, 1947, was decided to be observed as '*Begar Virodhi Divas*'. The day was observed but it was marked

22. This information is provided by Mr. Chetram, M.L.A., native of village Maharajsar.

23. Bharatpur's Kewaladeo bird sanctuary is famous for ducks.

24. Master Adityendra, former President, Rajasthan Pradesh Congress, lives at Jaipur and Bharatpur.

25. Raj Bahadur is now a Union Minister and lives in New Delhi.

26. It is significant that the leaders as well as the peasantry were trying to bring more cultivable lands under the plough by cutting down the *Roondhs* and the popular songs which were current among the farmers on this aspect were like :

Utho kisano karlo chet, Kato rundh banao khet,

by a most tragic incident at Bhusawar,²⁷ where Ramesh Swami lost his life, while his other friends, Sitaram²⁸ and Bhagwat Prasad Arya,²⁹ were badly injured. They wanted to reach Weir for the day's celebrations but the bus owner refused to give them seats. They therefore staged a *satyagraha* and lay down in front of the bus. The bus owner at the instance of the *Thanedar* of Bhusawar asked Chandanlal Patwari, the driver, to start the bus, but he refused. After this he himself started the bus which ran over Ramesh Swami killing him. Thus the tragedy occurred. The information is available in Government records and local newspapers, particularly *Navyug Sandesh*.

27. Bhusawar is a town in Bharatpur District and is the birthplace of the author.

28. Sitaram is still alive and lives at Umrain village.

29. Bhagwat Prasad Arya also is alive and a cloth merchant at Bhusawar.

SHEKHAWATI

Arya Samaj Awakens Kisans

The whole Shekhawati was constituted under Jhunjhunu Nizamat. Besides autonomous estates like Khetri and Sikar, Kachhariabas, Danta Ramgarh, Khud, Khandela, Bisau, Dundlod, Nawalgarh, Mandawa, Hirna, Alisar, Malsisar, etc., *thikanas* formed part of Shekhawati. The position of the *kisans* in these estates and *Thikanas* was very bad. A tiller was at the mercy of the Jagirdar. Like other parts of Rajasthan an agrarian movement started here also.

We give credit to the Arya Samaj for sowing the seeds of awakening amongst the *kisans* in the Shekhawati. Devibaksh Saraf of Mandawa established the Arya Samaj in Mandawa and under his guidance the Arya Samaj movement was becoming popular day by day in the whole of Shekhawati. Chaudhary Ghasiram, after joining the Congress at Hissar, was of the opinion that the Congress movement could not make the desired effect. So he left Hissar and came back to Shekhawati and joined the Arya Samaj in 1919. He visited villages and awakened *kisans* against the tyranny of the local jagirdars.

Mahatma Gandhi visited Bhiwani in 1921. A group of *kisans* reached Bhiwani to hear the Mahatma where a youth named Harlal Singh decided to espouse the cause of the *kisans* and conduct the movement. Harlal Singh after returning from Bhiwani met Vijai Singh Pathik and Baba Sitaram Das who also inspired him.¹ So he organized a *Kisan Panchayat* with the help of Netram Singh Gaurir, Hardeo Singh Patsari, Bhairon Singh Togra, Begraj Singh Mandori, etc., and became its Chairman.

In 1825 drawing inspiration from the Arya Samaj, Sikar's *kisans* tried to raise their voice against the poverty and inequities

1. Sardar Harlal Singh, at present resident of Jaipur, in an interview.

in the estate. Laduram Kisari was the guiding spirit. Ram Narain Chowdhry received an invitation from the Jats and the estate's *Munsrim*. But the Regency Council of Jaipur suppressed the *kisans* and Ram Narain Chowdhry was exiled from the State.²

The Jaipur Praja Mandal was concerned about the affairs and at the time of Jaipur *satyagraha* of 1927 in its demands included the demand of the *kisans* that *lag* may be declared illegal.³

Jat Panchayat

As the organizers of *Kisan Panchayats* were mostly Jats and the peasantry also consisted of the Jats there were two types of organizations—Jat Kisan Panchayat and Jat Maha Sabha. When the work of the Jat Maha Sabha was being organized Pandit Tarkeshwar Sharma of Pachari joined it and declared that the Jat Sabha was not only for the Jats but was a body for all the *kisans*. So it was renamed as the Kisan Sabha. In 1929 he started a handwritten newspaper titled *Gram Samachar* through which he encouraged the agitation. A few copies of the *Gram Samachar* are available with *Shodhak*, a journal of historical research published from Jaipur. Pandit Tarkeshwar Sharma is regarded as the brain trust of the Shekhawati *kisan* movement.

Inspired by the *Namak Satyagraha*, of 1930, Tarkeshwar Sharma with his companions Harlal Singh, Ghasiram Choudhary and Netram Singh started organizing *kisans* against the oppressive rule of the *Thikanas*. So in 1932 a session of the Kisan Sabha was held at Jhunjhunu. After this the *kisan* movement in Shekhawati gained momentum. A Jat Hostel was established by Ghasiram Choudhary. This hostel was nothing but a meeting place of the leaders.

Thakur Deshraj, a Jat from Bharatpur State, now came to Shekhawati to organize the movement in a serious way. He was a literary genius and has written a voluminous book on the

2. *Memoirs* of R. N. Chowdhry.

3. Letter No. 24, Conference of 1927, September 7, 1927.

Jats titled *Jat Shakti ka Itihas*. He invited all the *kisans* in Sikar to participate in the ceremony of the 'Jat Prajapati Yajna'. Pandit Tarkeshwar Sharma was appointed as the priest to conduct this religious ceremony. But it was religious only in name. The real object was to assemble all the *kisans* in Sikar so that future plans for conducting the movement could be discussed. *Kisans*, in groups, decided to join the 'Jat Prajapati Yajna'. This alarmed the *Thikana* authorities, as also the State of Jaipur and the British too. The authorities adopted repressive methods as the Jat agitation was gaining momentum. *Kisans* from all the villages and *Dhanis* (small villages) joined the movement and refused to pay land revenue. The main demands of the *kisans* at that time were that land should be measured and a settlement should be made so that a tiller may plough his land and might make some improvements. However, Pandit Tarkeshwar Sharma, Ghasiram Choudhary, Tara Chand Dhanod, Indraj and Ladu Ram were arrested under the Defence of India Rules. This made the movement more furious and under the leadership of Thakur Deshraj, the *kisans* were prepared to do or die.⁴

In the meantime a Jat *kisan* leader, Panne Singh Deorar, died and his place was taken by Netram Singh Gaurir, another youth Jat leader from Shekhawati, on the inspiration of Thakur Deshraj of Janghina who was leading the Shekhawati movement at that time. The *Thikanas* and State police reacted to the agitation sharply and as a result the villagers were looted, insulted and their houses burnt. After this the movement spread wide and the *kisans* moved in large numbers to Jaipur to meet the Maharaja. A demonstration was also staged under the leadership of Nar Singh Das Bababi who has left his *memoirs* which may be used as a good source of information on

Kedar Nath's personal papers.

Raghuvar Dayal Goel, Bikaner, personal papers.

Memoirs of Mukat Behari Lal Bhargava, Ajmer.

4. From Hira Lal Shastri to Jamna Lal Bajaj, dated October 20, 1938, Private Paper Collection, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

lands were measured and the rent was fixed.⁵ The leaders were released but Deshraj and Pandit Tarkeshwar Sharma were exiled from the State. So they left Jaipur State and went to Agra.

In Agra they started a newspaper, *Ganesh*, whose Editorial Board consisted of persons like Abhinahari of Kota, Kishanlal Joshi of Bharatpur besides Thakur Deshraj and Pandit Tarkeshwar Sharma. The *Ganesh* took up the cause and encouraged the *kisan* movement. The *kisan* movement in Shekhawati was continued. Thakur Deshraj and Pandit Tarkeshwar Sharma were raising their voice from Agra through the *Ganesh* while Ghasiram Choudhary, Netram Singh and Harlal Singh were leading the movement in Shekhawati. News published in the *Ganesh* was considered so inflammatory that it was soon banned not only by the State of Jaipur but by most of the States of Madhya Bharat and Rajputana.

However, the prohibitory orders against Pandit Tarkeshwar Sharma were withdrawn while those against Thakur Deshraj's remained effective. So after a year of exile from the State Tarkeshwar Sharma returned to Shekhawati. But in 1937 he along with Ghasiram, etc., was again arrested because their activities were considered seditious by the Jagirdars. However, they were released after some time, at the instance of Jamna Lal Bajaj.⁶

In 1939 the *kisans* of Shekhawati again refused to pay land revenue. So the leaders like Tarkeshwar Sharma, Ghasiram Choudhary and Netram Singh were arrested and tried under the Defence of India Rules and they were sentenced to imprisonment for one year. One hundred bighas of land belonging to Pandit Tarkeshwar Sharma was confiscated.⁷

In 1942 Mahatma Gandhi started the 'Quit India' movement. The movement in Shekhawati was also stirred. The *kisans* again rose in rebellion, refusing payment of taxes, *lags*, *bags*, etc. The Jaipur State Government again issued warrants against

5. Fortnightly Report, 1934.

6. *Ibid.*

7. *The Hindustan Times*, dated October 26, 1939.

Pandit Tarkeshwar Sharma, Ghasiram Choudhary, Netram Singh, etc., but Hira Lal Shastri got them cancelled. Hira Lal Shastri's interest in this affair resulted in the merger of the Jat Kisan Sabha into the Praja Mandal.⁸ Pandit Tarkeshwar Sharma became a member of the Legislative Assembly. In 1944, the *kisans* were instigated by Ghasiram Choudhary and Tarkeshwar Sharma not to pay land revenue. The leaders were arrested and sent to jail for three months and the agitation cooled down. (The *memoirs* of Pandit Hira Lal Shastri are a very useful source for this episode.) The information is provided by Government records and some newspapers like *The Hindustan Times*, *Gram Samachar*, etc. The interviews with the leaders in the form of *memoirs* are also the source material for this chapter. The Private Papers of Ram Narain Chowdhry have also been briefly consulted in this connection.

8. Private Papers of Hira Lal Shastri, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

BIKANER

Kangad

In 1945-46 Rajasthan witnessed another agrarian struggle at Dudhwa Khara and Kangad in Bikaner State.¹

On October 31, 1946, while the meeting of the Bikaner State Praja Parishad was being held, about 38 peasants of Kangad village of Ratangarh tahsil arrived and explained that the local Jagirdar had levied a higher revenue, which they protested and opposed. The Jagirdar, according to them, had collected a force of between 3,000 and 4,000 Rajputs and Kayamkhanis and had raided their houses, looted the belongings and criminally assaulted their women.

A committee of seven under the leadership of Hans Raj Arya went to Kangad, where they saw the deserted village, looted households, etc. While they were returning their itinerary was confiscated and given to the Jagirdar who had sent a force of 150 horsemen to overtake and capture them. All of them were beaten up one after the other. Their clothes were torn, their *Janeu* (sacred thread) was desecrated and sticks smeared with red chilli powder were forced into their vital parts. Similar treatment was also meted out to Hans Raj Arya. They were ridiculed as freedom-fighters. To add insult to injury they were undressed and paraded in village

1. It is somewhere mentioned that in about 1880 an uprising took place in the Churu Pargana of Bikaner State. The rebels are said to have been the Jats and Meghwals who are mostly Chamars but like to be called Jatavas. As we read in Ram Pande, *Studies in History—the Jats* the original possessors of the land before the coming of the Rajputs were the Jats who were put to a subordinate position afterwards. This frustration is seen in the 'Jat-Rajput Relations' everywhere all the time, and probably they could have sought union with the Jatavas for achieving their cause. But the uprising was crushed by the ruler.

streets and exposed to the gaze of passing-by men and women. This humiliation they had to suffer five times a day. Hans Raj Arya was taken to Sardar Patel by Sri Kumbha Ram Arya, and the latter explained the plight of the people in Kangad. Sardar Patel was deeply moved when he heard the whole story and expressed his sympathy and consoled them that as freedom-fighters they should be prepared for the worst.

Indomitable Hanuman Singh

The Jagirdar of Dudhwa Khara, who was given the honorary rank of a Major construed the formation of the Praja Parishad in his village and the creation of a Kasturba Fund as a personal insult. He, therefore, collected about 500 police constables with the connivance of the Inspector-General of Police and raided various houses in his villages, got the peasants ejected from their houses and also got them thrown out of their fields on the pretext of non-payment of revenue dues. The Jagirdar falsely stipulated huge dues against each peasant and the police looted any passer-by in the name of the revenue due.

Hanuman Singh's house was surrounded by 50 policemen, at the instance of the Government of Bikaner. The expenses on this force were to be borne by the village where there was an apprehension of a breach of the peace. Hanuman Singh went to the Queen Mother of Bikaner with his flock of 50 *kisans*, after taking the oath that he will either fight or die. The Queen Mother sent him to the Home Minister, who threatened him with dire consequences unless he sought an apology. His newly married wife was threatened to be abducted by police.

Hanuman Singh refused to recant and was confined to a solitary cell. When released he went to the Bikaner Maharaja then residing at Abu. But there also he was beaten up at the instance of the Maharaja. When he returned to Dudhwa Khara he was again called to Bikaner, and put under arrest, on a concocted charge of treason. His trial continued for 50 days. He remained on fast throughout his trial. In the period of 50 days he went so weak that he had to be taken to the Maharaja on a stretcher. He was finally sentenced to five years'

imprisonment. The Maharaja of Bikaner told him that if he wired Gandhiji referring to him as a benevolent king, he would be pardoned. Hanuman Singh refused, and his failing health forced the Maharaja to send him to the Medical Officer lest he should die.

The Maharaja of Bikaner in an effort to edge out Hanuman Singh from Bikaner offered him a farm measuring 100 *murra-bbas* in Ganga Nagar. But he refused, and said he preferred to live at Dudhwa Khara with honour. Pandit Nehru while at Udaipur to conduct the sessions of the Deshi Rajya Parishad congratulated Hanuman Singh in private for not accepting the land and encouraged him to fight on.

On reaching Dudhwa Khara he was again called by the Maharaja. But he wired his refusal to accept the 100 *murrab-bas*. The Maharaja could not withstand this insult and ordered arrest of Hanuman Singh which was effected by 500 of his horsemen. His family was thrown out of his house, and his two sisters-in-law along with his grand-mother aged 90 were sentenced to two years' imprisonment. His both wives were exiled from the State. He himself was arrested at Anupgarh. In jail he refused to take cereals and subsisted on a small cup of milk only. Policemen used to leave serpents in his prison cell. During his 10 months' imprisonment, he was on hunger-strike for 65 days. For seven days he did not take even water, and for 10 hours he even remained unconscious.

In such circumstances he was released from jail. Again in 1947 when the peasant movement was in full swing and the peasants were being deported and abandoned in the jungles of Punjab, Hanuman Singh was surrounded by 1,500 soldiers and held captive for one year at Ramgarh where also he was on a hunger-strike for 65 days. On August 15, 1947, when India achieved independence he and his both wives were freed.

Peasants rose in rebellion under the leadership of the Lok Parishad leader, Magharam. Other leaders were Kedar Nath,²

2. Kedar Nath is a member of the Legislative Assembly, Rajasthan, and resides at Jaipur.

Raghuwar Dayal Goel³ and Kumbharam Arya,⁴ although the *kisans* were agitating since 1932 under the leadership of Hanuman Singh of Dudhwa Khara.⁵ The movement is well depicted in the *Bikaner ka Rajnaitik Jagran aur Pandit Magharam*.⁶ This is a compilation of facts, reports and proceedings of the Praja Mandal, etc. The *Veer Arjun*⁷ is also a good source of information wherein the viewpoint of the *kisans* at Dudhwa Khara, their difficulties and genuine demands are given in elaborate details.

A pamphlet published from Alwar, through which the people of Bikaner State were asked to celebrate *kisandivas*,⁸ was distributed by Pandit Magharam Vaidya. It was stressed that all the *kisans* should assemble, be united and raise their voice against the atrocities committed by the ruler on the Kangad and Dudhwa Khara *kisans*. However Magharam was arrested and put in jail.⁹

The Jaipur Praja Parishad protested against the atrocities of the Bikaner Durbar and a committee to inquire was set up under the chairmanship of Gokul Bhai Bhatt and Hira Lal Shastri was appointed its secretary.¹⁰ The matter became very

3. Raghuvar Dayal Goel is an advocate. He also has some useful material like pamphlets, court arrest warrants, etc.
4. Kumbharam Arya, Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha), narrated the story to the author. Other important leaders were Sardar Harlal Singh, Ladu Ram Joshi and Ghasiram Choudhary.
5. *Lok Yuddha*, files of 1946.
6. *Bikaner ka Rajnaitik Jagran aur Pandit Magharam*, a copy was made available to the author by Sri Satya Narain Pareek, Director, Bhartiya Vidya Mandir, Shodh Pratishthan, Bikaner. *Shodhak* also possesses a copy of it. Magharam's son, Shri Ram Narain Sharma, is a Municipal Councillor in Bikaner. He also possesses *Private Papers of Pt. Magharam*, files of *Lok Yuddha* newspaper, Praja Mandal records, pamphlets and some cuttings from *Vir Arjun*.
7. *Veer Arjun*, dated December 22, 1945.
8. Printed at Mahabir Press, Alwar, available with Shri Ram Narain Sharma, son of Magharam at Bikaner.
9. Bikaner Praja Mandal Records, available with Shri Ram Narain Sharma.
10. *Veer Arjun*, dated June 26, 1945; *Memoirs of Hira Lal Shastri*.

much serious. The people's State Conference held at Udaipur under the chairmanship of Jawahar Lal Nehru passed a resolution asking for an inquiry.¹¹ Accordingly Hari Bhau Upadhyaya was sent for an on-the-spot inquiry. He reached Bikaner and stayed with the Maharaja as his personal guest. Hazarilal Jadiya has written an article in *Lok Yuddha*, a contemporary periodical, asking Hari Bhau Upadhyaya whether he had come for an inquiry regarding atrocities, firings, etc., committed by the State or to be a royal guest.¹² News published in *Navjyoti* regarding the Rs. 7,000 donation given by the Maharaja created a furore and suspense.¹³ It is a fact that Hari Bhau Upadhyaya was not allowed to see anyone during his stay with the Maharaja in the royal palace. Even the daughters of Magharam, who wanted to convey the cruelties they had suffered at the hands of State officials, tried their level best to see Hari Bhau Upadhyaya but all in vain.¹⁴

The poetic theme has played an important role here also. Mor Singh and Jiwan Singh Lamror composed few *geets* and poems, which became very popular and awakened the public. Mor Singh's *geet* which is supposed to have been composed in 1945 presents a picture of the conditions of the people and the atrocities committed by the Maharaja of Bikaner.¹⁵ A contemporary newspaper, *Kisan*, published from Bharatpur may also be regarded as an important source for the *kisan* movement of Dudhwa Khara.

We read in a periodical published from Calcutta¹⁶ that a meeting of Rajasthanis or Marwaris as they are called was held in Calcutta under the chairmanship of Nenuram Sharma to

11. *Lok Yuddha*, dated October, 14, 1945, available with Shri Ram Narain Sharma, at Bikaner.
12. *Lok Yuddha*, dated October 14, 1945.
13. *Navjyoti*, dated September 29, 1946.
14. Bikaner Praja Mandal Records.
15. *Maine dekhi Nadirshahi ya riyasat Bikaner men, Gali-gali aur dagar-dager men, dukhiya dekhe nar-nari, Dehate wejaddon men Praja bilakh rahi sari* (Mor Singh).
16. *Lokmanya*, dated June 15, 1946.

protest against the atrocities of the Bikaner Maharaja and ruthless crushing of the *kisan* movement by him in Bikaner. However, this periodical is source material for the Bikaner *kisan* movement and also for the feelings of Rajasthanis who were far from Rajasthan.

Deenbandhu,¹⁷ a periodical published from Kota and edited by Nathulal Jain,¹⁸ is also a source for the Bikaner peasant movement.

17. *Deenbandhu's* Few files are available at Kota.

18. Nathulal Jain, at present, is a member of the Rajasthan Public Service Commission, Ajmer.

MARWAR

Three-fold Slavery—Kisan Pays 116 Taxes

The non-cooperation movement started in British India during the year 1920-21 had its inevitable repercussions in the princely States. The political workers of Rajasthan tried to stir up an agitation in the States of Mewar and Marwar. The foremost leader of this agitation was one Motilal Bania of Mewar. The Bhils and the Girasias were exhorted to stop payment of land revenue to the State authorities and the Jagirdars. This no-rent propaganda threatened to create a serious trouble in the States of Marwar, Sirohi, Udaipur, Idar and Danta.¹

There was excessive revenue assessment, especially in the fields of the nobles in Marwar. Besides, there were a number of arbitrary additional taxes.² The situation grew very tense and there was great unrest in the rural areas particularly in the villages of Sumerpura where the situation seemed to be out of control. On February 7, 1922, two squadrons of the Sardar Risala of Jodhpur proceeded to Sumerpur with instructions to help the civil authorities in restoring order in the territory when required. This had the desired effect on the Bhils and the Girasias, who agreed to pay the usual taxes and not to listen to the agitators. They signed an *Ikrarnama* to this effect. Thus the agitation was quietened.³

In 1926, Jai Narayan Vyas made Bagri his headquarters and started his socio-economic activities in Sojat and Jaitaran districts. This annoyed the Jagirdars who physically assaulted Jai Narayan's supporters on more than one occasion. The State,

1. Kisanpuri : *Memoirs of Marwar Police*, pp. 138, 140.

2. Chowdhry, R. N.. *Hamara Vartman Rajasthan*, pp. 18, 74, 80, 81, 83.

3. Kishanpuri, *op. cit.*, pp. 142-43.

when approached, sided with the Jagirdars, because the Government was aware that speeches against the State and the Jagirdars were delivered by Jai Narayan Vyas's supporters during their tour in the jagir villages of Balunda, Bagri and Raipur. They had openly instigated the ryots not to pay any tax to the Jagirdars.⁴ The matter did not end here. Even in 1942 the Lok Parishad had demanded establishment of law and order especially in the jagir villages to save the people from the cruel and oppressive acts of the Jagirdars.⁵

Marwar (Jodhpur) was the State where 87 per cent of the land belonged to the Jagirdars and only 13 per cent to *Khalsa*.⁶ The position of a *Khalsa* tiller was better than that of those of jagirdar areas. A peasant was made to pay about 116 different kinds of taxes. Even the *kansa lag* and *pal lag* were in practice in Marwar State.⁷ A *kisan* was under a three-fold slavery : of the Jagirdar, the Ruler and the British, like in other States. As the movement started by the Lok Parishad was becoming popular and to gain support the Lok Parishad started putting forward *kisans*' difficulties, the State Government created a Jat Sabha under the leadership of Baldeo Ram Mirdha to counteract the Lok Parishad among the *kisans*. But, in spite of this, the Lok Parishad's movement was getting more and more support as their slogan was 'land belongs to the tiller.'⁸

The first occurrence of the agrarian movement in the State of Marwar was the incident at Basni, where *kisans* refused, under the leadership of Dwarka Das Purohit,⁹ to pay *pal lag*. The *kisans* preferred to burn down the *pal* instead of paying the tax. It was a success but the Jagirdars resented very much

4. Chowdhry, R. N., *op. cit.*, pp. 148-49.

5. *Jodhpur Andolan ka Sachcha Swaroop*, p. 3.

6. Administrative Reports, Jodhpur, 1934. (Shri Dwarkadas Purohit said in an interview that 89% land belonged to jagirdars and only 11 % was *Khalsa*.)

7. Interview with D. D. Purohit and Mathuradas Mathur.

8. *Dharti kinri, karsali* was the slogan of the Lok Parishad.

9. Interview with D. D. Purohit, who is, at present, Chairman, Rajasthan Housing Board, Jaipur.

and the leaders were beaten up by the *Golis* (kept-wives of Jagirdars gained from the wife's parental house in dowry).

Encouraged by the success of Basni the Lok Parishad under the leadership of Jai Narayan Vyas wanted to make the movement regular. With this view the former Jat Sabha was reorganized and named Kisan Sabha. Nar Singh Kachwaha became its Secretary. The Lok Parishad and the Kisan Sabha then jointly started a movement. They used to organize three meetings a day. The Jagirdars, on the other hand, to counteract the movement, were very much cautious and had the meetings disturbed by their hirelings who threw stones at them. In Bhopalgarh¹⁰ even snakes were thrown at the audience and leaders.¹¹ The *kisans* who intended to attend the meetings became the victims of the atrocities of the Jagirdars. Even then the movement gained momentum and Baldeoram Mirdha also became sympathetic towards the *kisans* and later on started attending some meetings too. One can safely conclude from this that caste affiliation plays a significant part and is a very important consideration in the leader-follower relationship¹² in the agricultural sphere. Other factors such as education, etc., were not so important considerations. The peasantry consisted mostly of the Jats, so the caste affiliation certainly played an important role.

Though expected, the exit of Donald Field from Marwar did not bring any change and the state of political affairs continued as before. Field was very much successful in keeping away the 'otherwise good'¹³ Maharaja from his subjects including political leaders whom he called all names.¹⁴ Even after

10. Bhopalgarh situated at about 30 miles from Jodhpur.
11. An interview with D. D. Purohit.
12. For leader-follower relationship in the agricultural sphere, see H. S. Verma's article in *Inter-discipline*, Vol. II, No. 1, 1974.
13. P. N. Mathur and Sobhag Mathur's article, *Proceedings of Rajasthan History Congress*, Beawar Session, pp. 125-137. Vaidya, Kanaiyalal D., *Progressive Jodhpur under British Prime Minister Sir Donald Field*, p. 25. (Abu Collection.)
14. *A Plot*, booklet published by Jai Narayan Vyas from Bombay, pp. 11-12.

the departure of Field from Marwar, the Government of the Maharaja did not give up its stiff or otherwise harsh attitude towards the people's movement. It was obviously under the influence of the Jagirdars who dominated the entire administration.¹⁵ It is strange that they (Jagirdars and the Maharaja) were unmindful of the wind of the change that was sweeping throughout the country and failed to see the writing on the wall¹⁶ but it was not at all strange because it was only natural feudal reaction.¹⁷ The Maharaja and the Jagirdars tried their level best to reject the people's demands and continue their hold on them. An attempt was also made to use the Sudhakar Report and usher in the so-called reform in which all the popular leaders being ex-convicts¹⁸ could be kept out of any share in the Government. Such a move could only bring closer the people and the Lok Parishad and this could be more easily and safely taken care of in the villages where by letting loose a reign of terror the poor farmers could be made to give up all sympathetic activities to help the cause of the Lok Parishad. If the farmers did not succumb to intimidation they could be punished and revenge taken. Such an action could perhaps compel the village folks to have second thoughts and oblige them to recast their attitude towards the Lok Parishad and its movement. The State Government in fact was turning a blind eye to the outrages of the Jagirdars. It perhaps suited all 'Durbars' in India to keep the popular movements in their States under their firm control lest their authority to bargain with the new emerging Indian Government should reduce. It could be an all-India pattern. [Sudhakar Scheme Rejected]

While events were moving fast in the country, the position in Marwar was that of a political deadlock and stalemate. Both the Lok Parishad and the Marwar Government were sticking to their guns and were unwilling to budge an inch from their respective positions. The Sudhakar scheme on which the State Government had staked its all was unacceptable to the

15. Mathur, *op. cit.*

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*

18. *Government of Jodhpur Act, 1947, Clause 34 (b) fn.*

Lok Parishad. The Parishad wanted radical and fundamental changes while the Government was reluctant to do so.¹⁹ Even the entire process of the Sudhakar Committee findings was gone into vain in a most leisurely manner—it was a sander which not only irritated and pricked the leaders but made them hostile and exhaust their patience. The Lok Parishad leadership, however, could not be demoralized as the fast-moving changes in the rest of the country proved to be a great morale-booster for them. The Jagirdars, on the other hand, were bound to feel panicky. They, out of fear and frustration, embarked upon a dangerous course and a reign of terror was let loose in the villages of Marwar.

Dabra

The law and order situation in the villages began to deteriorate. Political atmosphere in the State became tense every day. Jagirdars resorted to repressive measures in the villages with the sole purpose of counteracting the influence of the Lok Parishad.

Instances of lawlessness in the villages were legion. In Merta village a jagirdar molested a young girl and inflicted serious injuries on the two persons who tried to rescue the helpless victim. After committing the crime the jagirdar feared that only the village leader Hariram could dare report the incident to the higher authorities in Jodhpur and create a fuss. He, therefore, decided to remove Hariram also and attacked him, resulting in the death of the latter. Hariram's murder, however, worsened the situation. His body was brought to Jodhpur and was taken in procession jointly organized by the Lok Parishad, the Kisan Sabha and the Marwar Labour Union.²⁰

The rape and murder of Merta village was bound to spread terror amongst the simple and poor village folk who were unarmed, helpless and defenceless. It is a pity that they (Marwar's villagers) were so when the country had almost attained its independence. They, in fact, needed to be reassured

19. *The Praja Sevak*, dated October 24, 1946.

20. *The Hindustan Times*, dated March 13, 1947.

and saved from demoralization. The Lok Parishad and the Kisan Sabha, therefore, decided to have a joint session at a village called Dabra,²¹ near Didwana. The Jagirdars of Marwar took this as an affront and a challenge. They set themselves in action and more than 1,000 of them, including their hirelings, poured into Dabra from nearby places in a period of three days, before the joint session was to take place.²² They all assembled in the *garh*. The intentions of the arriving hordes were clear. They had come at somebody's behest and were lavishly entertained with wine and food before their services could be utilized.²³

The leader of this plot was Gulab Singh Dhankoli. The Jagirdar of the place (Dabra) intentionally left for Jodhpur. The plot to kill the leaders was also blessed by Bakhtawar Singh, the then Inspector-General of Police, Jodhpur, and the ruler of Marwar.²⁴ Somehow the leaders at Jodhpur and Jai Narayan Vyas came to know of this plan of the Jagirdars and informed Dwarkadas Purohit, Mathuradas Mathur, Bansidhar Purohit, etc., at Didwana through Kishan Lal Shah. In spite of this these leaders were determined to hold the session at Dabra and Shah also joined them.

The Lok Parishad and Kisan Sabha leaders, after addressing a meeting of *Panchas* at Didwana arrived at Dabra on March 13, 1947. Amongst them were Mathuradas Mathur, Dwarka Das Purohit, Bansidhar, Radhakrishan Bohra, Kishan Lal Shah and Narsingh Kachawah besides a few others. Soon after their arrival in the tiny village, there was a great cry of 'kill them' from the *kot* and they were encircled and attacked by the Jagirdars and their hirelings. Many of them were mounted on horsebacks and were even armed with lethal weapons besides their lathis. The leaders reached the house of Motiram Chaudhary, a village *kisan* leader. They were followed and attacked there. The hirelings entered Motiram's house and struck a reign of terror. Motiram's mother's feet were cut

21. *The Hindustan Times*, dated March 13, 1947.

22. *Ibid.*

23. *Ibid.*, dated March 20, 1947.

24. Interview with Mathuradas Mathur and D. D. Purohit.

off, his brother and father were killed, his wife was defaced.²⁵ All the leaders were mercilessly beaten up. There was complete panic and chaos. The wrath and fury of the Jagirdars was however not confined to the incoming leaders only. The whole village was surrounded and blocked and a reign of terror let loose on the village folk who were to entertain the leaders. Houses and huts were looted and set on fire. Women were raped and menfolk beaten up indiscriminately. The rampage continued for several hours. A few people even lost their lives. Government records show six deaths while leaders say the number was 32. One family of five which was returning from a nearby village to their house was attacked and killed. The Lok Parishad and Kisan Sabha leaders were all wounded. They were taken in that condition to the *Kot* and blank shots were fired to further terrorize the people.

The meeting was to be held at *Dinchadaya* (at about 11 o'clock). So the *kisans* were en route to attend the session at Dabra from their respective villages. Amongst them were ex-soldiers of the disbanded Jat regiment. As the entrance was blocked these ex-soldiers tried to counteract the Jagirdars in which the uncle of Dabra Jagirdar was killed. Mathuradas Mathur told the author that he heard the noise of 40 shots when he was inside the *Kot* (the leaders were taken into custody and from Motiram's *Dhani* were taken to the *Kot*) and were shut in an *Asbal* (stable). Dwarkadas Purohit and Mathuradas Mathur were wounded badly. Chunnilal Sharma died on the spot,²⁶ and Bansidhar Purohit was wounded.

However, the leaders were later released on the intervention of Seth Dugarji of Molasar who brought them to Jodhpur where they were admitted to hospital for treatment.

The news of Dabra Kand spread like 'wild fire throughout the country. It was most shocking and evoked wide spread protest. A public meeting was held at Jodhpur where Jai Narayan Vyas demanded immediate and strong action.²⁷ The Regional

25. *Praja Sevak*, dated October 24, 1946.

26. Ramarao and Rughuram of Lodnu also lost their lives.

27. *The Hindustan Times*, dated March 20, 1947.

Committee of the All India States People's Conference for Rajasthan condemned the *Kand* and the jagirdari repression and blamed the State administration which had done nothing to relieve the tension in spite of warnings. Several newspapers condemned the tragedy enacted under the very eyes of the Government. The *Vandematram* of Bombay held the Maharaja responsible for the tragedy and declared that it would shake the very foundations of his throne. The *Janambhumi*, another Bombay paper, observed that the blood spilled in Dabra would nurture the plant of freedom in which the Rajas will have no place. The *Lokvani* of Jaipur described the news as sensational and the armed attack on non-violent persons a disgrace to mankind.²⁸

Public protest and indignation, however, had no effect on the Marwar Government as it was run by those who had vested interests. No attempt was made to punish the guilty. On the other hand, the Jagirdars implicated the leaders and charged them with murder and registered a case under Section 302, Indian Penal Code,²⁹ against them. The case was conducted in the District and Sessions Court of Sampatram. But soon afterwards the Jagirdars were so terrified that the leaders were released on bail without their moving an application for that. But again they became victims and were charged with indulging in activities prejudicial to peace. They were further charged with sedition. Cases against them were withdrawn only after the Jai Narayan Vyas Government came into power in Marwar.³⁰ Mathuradas Mathur and Dwarka Das Purohit were taken in the popular Ministry of Jai Narayan Vyas. But a legal and constitutional point then arose as to whether a criminal could be sworn in as a Minister. The guns of the feudal order and the Lok Parishad were once again mounted and put face to face. However, the Deputy Prime Minister, Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel, who headed the Home Ministry,

28. Quoted by *Praja Sevak*, dated March 26, 1947.

29. Judicial Proceedings, Jodhpur Records, Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner.

30. *The Administration of Jodhpur State (1800-1947)*. Dr. (Mrs.) Nirmala M. Upadhyaya p. 210.

interfered in the case. Ajit Singh was replaced by P. S. Dar. Sardar Patel recalled the files and ultimately the case was dropped.

This was reacted to vehemently by the Jagirdars. It is proved by an incident at Bhandana in Nagaur where, in 1951, on the second day of Diwali, the Jagirdars committed an outrage on an audience who had gathered for *Rama Shyama* and killed 16 people on the spot.³¹

However, in the United Rajasthan, zamindari and jagirdari were abolished and the jagirdari attitude towards peasants which often took a violent form was removed.

The basis of information of this chapter is a native weekly newspaper, *Praja Sevak*,³² published from Jodhpur. Harendra Chaudhary's article regarding the Dabra incident is not only informative but also quite critical. *The Hindustan Times*, *The Times of India*, the *Harijan* and the *Leader* are other newspapers which also throw light on the episode. A few letters of Mathuradas Mathur are included in *Sardar Patel's Correspondence*.³³ Besides, personal interviews with the leaders is a very good source of information.³⁴ Government records, after 1935, however, are not allowed to be consulted by the Rajasthan Government and after 1945 by the Government of India, but the judicial proceedings of the case may be regarded as a very good source for the aftermath of Dabra. *Marwar me Andolan ka Sachcha Swarup*, a booklet, has incorporated them all.³⁵

31. Government records show only five people killed.

32. *Praja Sevak's* complete file is available at its office at Jodhpur.

33. Sardar Patel Correspondence Vol. VIII, pp. 376-88.

34. Recollections in the form of personal interview of D. D. Purohit and Mathuradas Mathur, available with *Shodhak*, Jaipur.

35. *Andolan ka Sachcha Swarup*, pp. 3-5.

AJMER AND MERWARA

The Pacified Peasant

Ajmer-Merwara was a province under the Government of India till the country attained Independence. Thereafter it was declared a State and remained so till 1956, when it became a part of Rajasthan State. There were *Istimarars* enjoying judicial rights, a brief description of which has already been made in the preceding pages.

The Raja of Pisangan levied a new *lag*. The ryot was already in the grip of *begars*, *lags*, *bags*, etc. Chandkaran Sharda, Secretary of the Rajputana Madhya Bharat Sabha, Ajmer, went there to see the Pisangan Raoraja and try for some relaxation but all in vain. The Sabha then decided to strengthen the Gram Hitkarini Sabha and a movement against the new tax started. However, the Commissioner of Ajmer interfered and an agreement was reached between the parties. The tax and *begar* were removed as is evident from the information contained in the proceedings of the Rajputana Madhya Bharat Sabha, Ajmer, as well as the Private Papers of Ram Narain Chowdhry, Hari Bhau Upadhyaya and Manik Lal Verma.

After 1942 a large number of *kisans* were deprived of the proprietary rights in land by *Istimarari* in Ajmer-Merwara as an aftermath of the 1942 Quit India Movement. Mukat Behari Lal Bhargava got issued after 1947 an ordinance declaring *begar*, *lag* and *bag* as illegal. Afterwards the ordinance became law. In 1950 he also got an Act passed by Parliament according to which *kisans* were given permanent rights over their lands, compensation was granted to them for their loss in 1942, the rate of revenue was fixed at one-eighth instead of one-sixth and *Istimarari* was abolished. He also pleaded free the peasants' cases in the courts of law. However, Ajmer was declared a 'C' Class State after the country attained Independence. It is

significant that in Ajmer-Merwara there was hardly any uprising of an agrarian nature. This could be attributed to the two-fold policy of the British Government by whom it was directly administered. From the time of Col. Dixon, Superintendent of the tract (1835-1857), steps were taken to ameliorate the conditions of the peasantry. Small loans were advanced to the cultivators for the construction of wells, purchase of sheds, etc., and were recovered in easy instalments. The result was within a short period thousands of wells were constructed, giving great relief to the peasantry. At the time of famine or scarcity timely steps were taken to protect the people, the livestock and the crops. This policy had kept the peasants pacified.

The policy of enough freedom to the political parties had also resulted in the softening of the political leaders who could give vent to their feelings from the platform and therefore did not need to collect peasants around them. *Memoirs* of Mukat Behari Lal Bhargava available with him at his Ajmer residence at Hathi Bhata, Ajmer, are a good source of information on the subject besides Government records.

OTHER MINOR MOVEMENTS

Jhalawar

Agrarian discontent is also found in the former State of Jhalawar where the *Kisans* protested against the disparity in the revenue levied on tilled and untilled land. The State authorities had compelled the *Kisans* to pay the revenue even on the untilled land. Mangilal Bhabya, an ordinary teacher in Government service, assumed the command of the uprising of the *Kisans*. (This information is provided by a newspaper *Karamveer*, published from Khandwa in Madhya Pradesh.) The paper also published Mangilal Bhabya's articles on the Jhalawar movement.

A year later this movement took a different turn and became a movement for the abolition of the feudal system and *begar* (forced labour). Mangilal Bhabya was summoned by the Dewan of the State. He met the Dewan and handed over his resignation from the State service and continued against the State authorities till India achieved independence.

This information is described only in a secondary source material.¹

Kishangarh

In the former State of Kishangarh Kantichandra Purohit staged a *Dharana* against the export of grain from the State. This later took shape of a movement. The State Government to curb this adopted repressive measures and subsequently Kanti Chand Purohit and his son were arrested under Section 38 of the *Defence of India Rules*. They were sentenced to one

1. Sumnesh Joshi, *Rajasthan Men Swatantra Sangram ka Senani*, p. 746.

and a half years' imprisonment plus a fine of Rs. 400. However they were released after six months. The source of this information is only a letter written by Kantichandra Purohit to the author. The letter is available with '*Shodhak*', Jaipur.

Karauli

Karauli was one of the small princely States of Eastern Rajputana. Here also there were a few problems regarding the agrarian society. This was because first, there was a provision prohibiting the killing of the wild pig. This was a continuous source of trouble to those engaged in agriculture secondly, *begar* was prevailing in a ratio higher than in other adjacent States. Kunwar Madan Singh, son of a former Dewan of Karauli State, took up the cause of the suffering peasantry. He demanded that the State should allow the killing of pigs to the *Kisans* to protect their agricultural produce and *begar* should be abolished. (This was also demanded that the language of the State should be Hindi in place of Urdu.) The Kunwar decided not to eat *chapatis*, wear shoes and rest on a cot till the goal was achieved. When the State Government did not take note of this, Kunwar Madan Singh went on a hunger-strike at Gopal Singh Chatri where he was joined by his wife. When the villagers of the State came to know about this they assembled at Gopal Singh Chatri and raised Slogan against the State in support of Kunwar Madan Singh's demands. The State authorities had bow and, in 1927, they granted the demands.

This information is available in the articles written by Kalyan Gupta in the different leading newspapers published from Ajmer, namely, *Navin Rajasthan*, *Nav Yug Sandesh* and *Tyag Bhumi*.

CONCLUSIONS

Bijolia—The Pioneer

Agrarian movements in the States of Rajputana started much before any such movement in any part of the country. As early as 1897, in *Thikana* Bijolia of the State of Mewar, a pioneering non-violent struggle began which continued for 80 years and also spread to the Bhil areas of Sirohi.

Another movement was led by Vijai Singh Pathik after 1925. He was a revolutionary by conviction, who in an orderly way organized the *kisans* for a non-violent agrarian struggle. The movement was a predecessor of the one launched by Mahatma Gandhi in Champaran in the year 1921. It can be said with some conviction that Gandhiji had the full knowledge of this movement, and perhaps derived inspiration from this for the peasant uprising that he subsequently led. Even in the national movement Bijolia played a pivotal role.

The Bijolia movement in its turn also inspired other movements, at Begu, Bundi and the Bhil movement. The Praja Mandal and the Lok Parishad led the peasant uprisings during independence on the lines of Bijolia.

Leadership

The question of leadership is of vital importance indeed. Basically the problem with the peasant uprisings is, as the experience of such struggles around the world amply demonstrates, that the peasantry on its own is incapable of leading them. And, therefore, for all practical purposes the leadership is an external contribution.

Ronald Mousier in his book *Peasant Uprisings in the 17th Century France, Russia and China* has concluded that it was the vested interest of certain people which ultimately led to such peasant uprisings. Same type of views have been expressed in *The Social Origins of the Democracy and Dictatorship* (author

unknown) and *Peasants Wars in Germany* by F. M. Engels. An Indian author, Vinay Bhushan Choudhary, after carefully recording and reflecting on the peasant uprisings in Bengal has expressed similar opinions in his article 'The story of a Peasant Revolt in a Bengal District', (*Bengal Past and Present.*, Vol. XCII, ii, 174).

Rajasthan was no exception to the above rules whether in Bijolia or in Begu, Sirohi, Dabra or Dudhwa Khara, or Bharatpur, etc., and all the uprisings were led by persons not from the ranks of *kisans* or peasants. The leaders were external elements, certainly with political motives. Vijai Singh Pathik was a Gujar, not engaged in cultivation. Similarly, Manik Lal Verma was a service class person, in the service of *Thikana* Bijolia. Jai Narayan Vyas, Mathuradas Mathur, Dwarka Das Purohit, Ram Narain Chowdhry, Nenu Ram Sharma, Magharam Ved, Professor Kedar, etc., came from classes other than the peasant and had wide political ambitions.

After Independence the State of Rajasthan witnessed two agrarian struggles: (i) 'Ganganagar Struggle' led by Y.N. Handa, a Communist leader. Peasantry did not come in the vanguard at all. (ii) In Bharatpur, the same kind of uprising was led by Pandit Ram Kishan, a socialist worker and political leader and not a peasant by profession. This shows that the peasant of the country and especially of Rajasthan was not so aware, if at all he was, of his rights; that he needed outside goading and guidance to make him conscious of his rights and to fight for the cause. It is significant that the well-known Champaran Movement (1921) was led by Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Rajendra Prasad who too were not peasants or farmers by occupation but ambitious political workers.

Nature Of The Movement

The greatest task of a historian surveying the movements of this era is to determine their nature. Precisely whether these were in the nature of agrarian or they ought to be described otherwise. In all these movements whether it was Bijolia or Dudhwa Khara, etc., one factor was demonstrably present: that they were, by and large, part and parcel of the Freedom Movement launched in the country, though the Bijolia peasant

movement was purely agrarian in the beginning or, say, till its leadership was assumed by Vijai Singh Pathik.

An analysis of these movements reveals sufficiently that the struggle was more often than not designed to convey the grievances to the Jagirdars, and not intended to overthrow their authority. In none of these movements is there any sign or symptom which may show that the leadership was committed to the uprooting of the feudal system. The feudal overlord, the *Thakur*, at the same time enjoyed very good relations with certain *kisans*, but some others were alienated. The leadership always had this in their sub-conscious while they launched any movement. The nature of the movements was absolutely non-violent, though the State occasionally took to violence.

India is an agricultural nation. The majority of its population lives in the rural areas. For a national struggle and national movement it was essential that the villagers be taken into confidence. This is what was precisely contemplated by the leaders of these movements, who foresaw that without their active involvement the struggle could not assume the gigantic proportions that they thought would make any mark. In Rajasthan the problem was of a different nature, for here the struggle was against the triumvirate of the Raja, the British and the Jagirdar. It was, therefore quite essential for a struggle to have a substantial involvement of the rural peasantry.

Religion And Caste

In India, religion and caste have played a dominant role since time immemorial. Once when Vivekananda was asked in America as to what language was easily comprehended by Indians he replied, the 'Language of Religion'. In Rajasthan also religion and caste have played a decisive role. For we find time and again that the leadership has made use of these twin tools for conveying their radical message to the peasantry. For example, the Sarup Sabha was created by one Sadhu Govind. The movement of Bijolia was also started by one known as Sadhu Sitaram Das.

The Bhils were taken to temples of *Kalaji*, etc., and made to vow in front of the deity for continued struggle by the

leaders. Religion was thus used as a tool by various leaders. Caste has similarly played its role. In Bijolia there was a tribe of peasants known as 'Dhakars' whose sentiments were evoked when 'Dhakar Panchayat' were created, placing Dhakars at their heads. In Marwar the Jat Sabha was created with B.R. Mirdha at its head, Marwar being inhabited mainly by the Jats. In the Shekhawati the Jat Sabha was a premier organization of the *kisans*. In the movement from 1931 onwards even Jat leaders were called from outside. For instance, Chajju Ram and Chhuttan Lal from Haryana and Thakur Desh Raj from Bharatpur were invited to join the struggle. The leader of Dungarpur, Bhogi Lal Pandiya, was a *Baniya* by caste. This is reported by Sumnesh Joshi in his compilation, *Rajasthan ke Swatantrata Sangram ke Senani*.

In Shekhawati the role of religion was very vital. Under the religious garb of the Arya Samaj, the leaders prepared peasants for any movement they wanted to start.

Role of Mahajans

This study reveals an important aspect of the economic situation and the role of *Mahajans* in the agrarian sphere. It is evident from this study that sometimes it was the *Mahajan* who was ruling the area instead of the *Thikanedar*. He lent money to the *Thikana* and in return was authorized to realize some *lags* in lieu thereof. So he collected the revenue or *lag*. The *kisan* also often borrowed money from the *Mahajan* of the village, and the *Mahajan* received his money back in the form of crop produce and also exploited a *kisan's* resources.

Role of Panchayats

India is a traditionally democratic country and the primary unit of its democratic set-up is seen in the existence of panchayats. The panchayat system in Rajasthan has long existed according to the ancient culture, heritage and polity. It is significant that local traditions and customs were respected, and the local law was definitely shown regard. The Rajasthan peasant was not a *serf* of European type. It is evident that he enjoyed more freedom than the *serf* of Europe. Perhaps this was the reason why Russian or Chinese-style socialism could not take root in India.

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Dr Ram Pande is the Editor of **Shodhak**, a journal devoted to historical research, published from Jaipur. He has taught at several colleges in Rajasthan and Meerut University. Author of four books on different



aspects of Indian history and one on international relations, he has presented a number of research papers at Indian History Congress, Rajasthan History Congress and proceedings of the Indian Historical Records Commission. He secured his Ph.D degree from the University of Rajasthan for his thesis, 'Bharatpur upto 1826', and is now working for D.Lit. on 'The History of Mauritius'.